CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

TUESDAY ▸ MARCH 17, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 242 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

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BIHAR RS POLLS

NDA sweeps all 5 seats; Mahagathbandhan stumbles

JD (U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP national president Nitin Nabin were elected to the Upper House of Parliament in a keenly contested poll

RS ELECTION WINNERS

BIHAR
- Nitish Kumar (JD-U)
- Ram Nath Thakur (JD-U)
- Nitin Nabin (BJP)
- Shivesh Kumar (BJP)
- Upendra Kushwaha (RLM)

TAMIL NADU

(All 6 candidates elected unopposed)
- Tiruchi Siva and J Constandine Ravindran (DMK)
- M Thambi Durai (AIADMK)
- Anbumani Ramadoss (PMK)
- Christopher Manickam (Congress)
- LK Sudhish (DMDK)

ASSAM
- Manmohan Samal, Sujeet Kumar (BJP)
- Dilip Ray (BJP backed)
- Santrupt Mishra (BJD)

HARYANA
- (Counting halted in for Haryana RS polls as BJP, Cong object to votes)

Of the 37 seats, 26 leaders - including Sharad Pawar, Ramdas Athawale, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Thambi Durai, Vinod Tawde, and Babul Supriyo - have been elected unopposed in the Rajya Sabha election across 7 states.

PATNA

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) clinched a clean sweep of all five Rajya Sabha seats from Bihar in the election held on Monday, dealing a significant blow to the Mahagathbandhan.

In the final tally, both Nitish Kumar and Nitin Nabin emerged as frontrunners, securing 44 first-preference votes each. They were followed by Ram Nath Thakur and Upendra Kushwaha, who earned 42 votes apiece.

Shivesh Ram, the BJP's fifth candidate, secured 30 first-preference votes but successfully claimed the final seat with the aid of second-preference votes.

Strategic missteps and internal discord within the INDIA bloc resulted in four of its legislators failing to reach the Assembly for voting, undermining its prospects of winning one of five seats.

The election was necessitated by the impending retirement of several senior leaders. Janata Dal (United) veterans Harivansh Narayan Singh and Ram Nath Thakur are due to retire on April 9, alongside Rashtriya Janata Dal's Amarendra Dhari Singh and Prem Chand Gupta. Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha is also stepping down.

BJP holds a clear advantage

In terms of numbers, the BJP holds a clear advantage with 89 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Bihar's 243-member Assembly, enough to secure at least two Rajya Sabha seats on its own.

The Nitish Kumar-led JDU has 85 legislators, while other NDA partners — including Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) with 19 MLAs, Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) with 5, and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha with 4 — added crucial support to round out the alliance's strength.

Mahagathbandhan's lone candidate suffers defeat

For the Mahagathbandhan, the lone candidate Amarendra Singh Dhari faced a resounding defeat, a result many attribute to the coalition's failure to present a unified strategy and ensure attendance of its MLAs.

Across the country, 37 Rajya Sabha vacancies were up for election this cycle. Out of these, 26 candidates were declared elected unopposed, while the remaining 11, including Bihar's five, were contested and concluded on Monday. Alongside Bihar, four seats from Odisha and two from Haryana also witnessed polling. The results are, however, yet to be declared in these states.

BJP-backed Dilip Rai wins as BJD, Cong MLAs cross-vote in Odisha

BJP has managed to pull victories on three seats in Odisha, including one of independent Dilip Rai, as eight BJD and three Congress MLAs voted against the party whip. Apart from Dilip Ray, Manmohan Samal, Sujit Kumar from BJP, and Santrupt Mishra from BJD won the election.

Upset over insufficient replies by govt, Speaker adjourns Assembly, walks out

BENGALURU

Unprecedented scenes unfolded in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Monday as Speaker UT Khader refused to continue presiding over the House, expressing strong displeasure over the absence of Congress ministers and MLAs during the proceedings.

The issue was eventually resolved after CM Siddaramaiah's assurance, Khader told reporters.

What happened?

An upset Khader abruptly adjourned the session without announcing when the House would reconvene. He said he would not chair the proceedings until the issue of attendance, both of ministers and legislators, is addressed.

The Speaker's anger stemmed from the absence of several ministers and officials who were expected to be present to respond to written questions raised by MLAs. With ministers missing from the House, several members said their questions were left unanswered, triggering outrage from the Opposition as well.

The incident occurred while written replies to 84 of the 230 listed questions were being tabled in the House. The Opposition strongly criticised the government, alleging that ministers had been failing to provide the expected replies since the beginning of the session.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka said the attendance in the Assembly was extremely poor, claiming that barely 15% of members were present in the House. He pointed out that this was the fourth time the issue had been raised, expressing frustration over what he described as the lack of seriousness shown by ministers and legislators.

Khader, clearly annoyed, reminded the House that the Assembly session is meant to address the concerns of constituencies and that ministers are expected to be present to respond to questions from MLAs.

Kerala, WB polls: BJP's first list out

KOCHI

The BJP on Monday released the first list of 47 candidates for Kerala Assembly polls.

The saffron party fielded Rajeev Chandrasekhar from the Nemom seat, former Union minister George Kurian from Kanjirappally constituency and K Surendran from the Manjeshwaram seat.

In Bengal, Suvendu Adhikari has been pitted against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Bhawanipur. Former Rajya Sabha memebr Swapan Dasgupta was fielded from Rashbehari.

Dilip Ghosh has been fielded from Kharagpur Sadar, Biman Mahto from Salboni, both in Paschim Medinipur district, while Swapan Dasgupta will contest the Rasbehari seat in south Kolkata. Assembly polls will be held on a single day in Kerala on April 9,

'Distorted picture of India': MEA slams US report

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday hit back at a report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), terming it a "motivated" and "biased characterization of India".

In its latest report, the USCIRF flagged the alleged wor sening of religious freedom in India and called for the country to be designated as a "Country of Particular Concern."

The USCIRF also called for targeted sanctions to be imposed on individuals and entities, such as the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), for their "responsibility and tolerance of severe violations of religious freedom by freezing those individuals' or entities' assets and/or barring their entry into the United States."

It recommended that the US government designate India as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, for "engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations."

Reacting to the report, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We categorically reject its motivated and biased characterization of India." "For several years now, USCIRF has persisted in presenting a distorted and selective picture of India, relying on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts. Such repeated misrepresentations only undermine the credibility of the Commission itself," he added.

He called on the USCIRF to look into attacks on Hindu temples in the US.

Missiles rain hell across Mideast, non-stop!

DUBAI

Seventeen days on, and there is no end in sight to the West Asia war. What began as a joint military strike by the US and Israel in Iran on February 28 spread across the region and beyond, roiling energy markets and driving up oil prices. After the attack that killed Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Tehran resorted to airstrikes on American bases in West Asia, espeacially Gulf countries.

The three sides are bombing relentlessly as both sides targeting each other's military, diplomatic and strategic infrastructure, and Israel having expanded its offensive to target Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist political party and banned paramilitary group, in Lebanon.

The IRGC of Iran launched extensive missile and drone attacks, dubbed 'Operation True Promise 4' and 'Fateh Khyber', targeting US military bases in the Gulf (Qatar, UAE, Kuwait), the 5th Fleet in Bahrain and, Saudi Arabia, causing widespread damages.

The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a route for about 20% of global oil exports, caused oil crunch across the world, including India, and crude prices skyrocketing.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in its briefing, said the LPG situation in the country is "a concern" though no official shortage has been mentioned. New Delhi has used diversified channels to procure crude.

ISRAELI-US & IRANIAN WAR VICTIMS

COUNTRY	DEATH	INJURIES
IRAN	1,444	18,551
Lebanon	826	2000+
Israel	15	3,138
US	13 (soldiers)	140-150
Bahrain	2	Dozens
Iraq	27	Dozens
Kuwait	6	Dozens
Oman	3	15
Qatar	0	16
Saudi Arabia	2	12
UAE	6	141

Which side are you on? Ali Larijani asks Muslim nations

TEHRAN

Senior Iranian official Ali Larijani has issued a message addressed to Muslims worldwide and the governments of Islamic nations, urging unity and criticising what he described as aggression by the United States and Israel against Iran. In the statement, Larijani said Iran had been subjected to what he called a 'deceitful American-Zionist act of aggression' carried out during a period of negotiations. He said the attack resulted in the deaths of a senior commander of the Islamic Revolution as well as several civilians and military leaders.

According to Larijani, the Iranian people responded with 'steadfast national and Islamic resistance', which he said prevented the aggressors from achieving their objectives,

Govt mandates biometric authentication for domestic LPG consumers

NEW DELHI

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Sunday mandated e-KYC for all domestic LPG consumers.

MoPNG took to their X account and stated that all domestic LPG consumers are required to complete Biometric Aadhaar Authentication (e-KYC).

It added that people can verify from comfort of their homes using Oil Marketing Company's mobile app and Aadhaar FaceRD app.

The consumers can visit the official website for more information or contact their LPG distributor. India is facing LPG shortage driven by the West Asia conflict. Following this, many hoteliers and street food vendors are scrambling to find alternatives.

The West Asia crisis has led to the near-shutting of the Strait of Hormuz, from where approximately 90 per cent of India's LPG imports pass through. This has triggered supply concerns across the country, which has resulted in panic buying and a perceived shortage of LPG cylinders at many places.

'Shivalik' reaches Gujarat port, crossing war-hit Hormuz

An India-flagged LPG tanker, Shivalik, which crossed the conflict-hit Strait of Hormuz, has arrived at Gujarat's Mundra Port. Two Indian-flagged vessels carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) were granted transit through the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian authorities. One of them is the Shivalik, while the other vessel is Nanda Devi. Earlier, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Shipping Ministry, had informed on Saturday that the vessels Shivalik and Nanda Devi were expected to arrive on March 16 and March 17 respectively.

Safe Hormuz passage? release our seized tankers: Iran to India

Iran has asked India to release three tankers seized in February as part of talks seeking the safe passage of Indian-flagged or India-bound vessels out of the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz, as per reports. Indian authorities seized the three Iran-linked tankers near Indian waters alleging they had concealed or altered their identities and were involved in illegal ship-to-ship transfers at sea. Tehran has also sought supplies of certain medicines and medical equipment, according to one of the sources, an Iranian official. Iran's ambassador to New Delhi met Indian foreign ministry officials on Monday to discuss the issue, the source said.

I'm 'dying' for coffee: Netanyahu amid death rumors

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu posted a video from a café dismissing viral claims of his death, joking "I'm dying for coffee" and displaying his hands after AI-generated images online suggested he had more than 10 fingers.

WAR AT A GLANCE

EU moots naval mission

EU foreign ministers will Monday discuss extending the bloc's Red Sea naval mission to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz, said the bloc's top diplomat Kaja Kallas.

Trump seeks NATO help

President Donald Trump said Sunday that NATO faces a "very bad" future if US allies fail to help open the Strait of Hormuz. He also said an upcoming summit in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping could be delayed as he presses for China's help to open the strait.

Oil reserves released

Strategic oil reserves will be released "immediately" in Asia and Oceania, and as early as the end of March in America and Europe, the International Energy Agency said, as governments try to contain the surge in prices caused by the war.

QUICK READ

'Reels Manju' fined for triple riding without helmet

BENGALURU

Manjunath from Doddaballapur is known on social media through his reels video, popularly known as Bunro. The police have fined him for making this same reels video. He shared a video of himself riding a bike with two women doing reels. This came to the notice of police, him violating traffic rules by riding triples and not wearing a helmet. The found the reels man, brought him to the police station and fined him. Manjanna has come to his senses after being fined. It was my fault for riding a triple without wearing a helmet. There are people at home who trust us. I appeal to people to wear helmets for safe driving.

Emirates flight disrupted at B'luru airport

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

An Emirates Airlines flight was disrupted at the Kempegowda International Airport. Emirates flight EK569 (A380), which was scheduled to take off from KIA 4.30 am, was diverted to Devanahalli airport after failing to get a landing signal by the time it reached the Indian border. The plane landed at around 7.30 am. Passengers had to wait for several hours at the airport due to the disruption in flights. The airline has arranged hotels for passengers who were supposed to fly to Dubai and Jeddah. The flight is scheduled to take off at 10.30 pm. The airport staff provide passengers with water and snacks and a place to rest.

Man assaulted for making triple riding video

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A bike rider was allegedly assaulted by a group of thugs for making a triple riding video on Cubbon Road here. A man was assaulted for making a video of him riding a triple on three bikes. The thugs attacked him with a weapon for filming a video of the triple riding. A man who was riding a bike on Cubbon Road noticed the goons riding a triple on the same bike. When he tried to shoot the scene on his mobile phone, the goons intercepted the man. He then hurled abuses and gestured fingers. He also threw an object at the man and assaulted him. The incident took place under the jurisdiction of Commercial Street police station and police are on the lookout for the goons who carried out the attack.

15L excess BPL cards, 7.8L flagged as suspicious

Ration card mismatch: Karnataka's public distribution system is in the spotlight after the state govt admitted it issued about 15 lakh more BPL ration cards than the number of eligible families identified by the Centre

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Data tabled in the assembly by food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa last week shows that while the Centre has identified almost 1.1 crore eligible families, the state has issued 1.24 crore BPL cards.

Also, nearly 7.8 lakh beneficiaries have been flagged as suspicious. Replying on behalf of Muniyappa in the assembly, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said coverage is extensive, especially in rural areas where it is about 95 percent of households.

In many areas, ineligible people apply for ration cards for other purposes, hospitalisation for instance, Rao said. If the Centre does not fund the excess, the state will have to step in. Meanwhile, the department has identified over seven lakh suspicious beneficiaries based on eligibility norms set by both Centre and the state. Central criteria consider beneficiaries ineligible if their group annual income exceeds Rs 1.2 lakh, GST turnover crosses Rs 25 lakh, or if UIDAI records mark the person as deceased.

Beneficiaries with more than 7.5 acres of land under the PM-Kisan database or those owning vehicles above a specified value are also flagged. The exclusion rule applies to permanent govt employees and staff of government-run corporations who pay taxes, households owning more than three acres of land, urban houses exceeding 1,000sqft, families owning four-wheelers for non-commercial use, or those with annual incomes above Rs 1.2 lakh.

Meanwhile, thousands of applications remain pending. As of February 22, nearly 1.8 lakh Priority House Hold (PHH) applications were awaiting disposal, with the highest numbers in Kalaburagi (26,941), Belagavi (16,712), and Bengaluru (16,475).

Thousands of applications remain pending

As of February 22, nearly 1.8 lakh priority household (PHH) applications were awaiting disposal, with the highest numbers in Kalaburagi (26,941), Belagavi (16,712), and Bengaluru (16,475). Another 1.3 non-priority household (NPHH) cards are pending clearance, including 11,267 in Belagavi, 10,147 in Bengaluru South and 10,035 in Bengaluru West.

Another 1.3 non-priority household (NPHH) cards are pending clearance, including 11,267 in Belagavi, 10,147 in Bengaluru South and 10,035 in Bengaluru West. In September 2023, the state suspended approval of new NPHH cards. Legislators were told that ineligible PHH cards were being converted into NPHH cards, and in October 2025 the government directed officials to convert such cards while issuing an equal number of new priority cards to eligible applicants.

Meanwhile, the food and civil supplies department stopped the open market sale scheme (domestic) of the Food Corporation of India in July 2023, which earlier supplied subsidised rice and wheat to NPHH beneficiaries.

Grains were distributed until February 2024, and rice distribution for NPHH ration cards were temporarily suspended, Muniyappa said in a written reply to Vedavyasa Kamath, who represents Mangaluru South. Meanwhile, the state plans to revise the Rs 1.2 lakh annual income ceiling for ration card eligibility, acknowledging that the limit fixed in 2017 is outdated.

Administrative reforms commission headed by RV Deshpande has recommended increasing it to Rs 3 lakh. The food department will evaluate the appropriate revision, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told the House.

FACTFILE

- While the Centre has identified almost 1.1 crore eligible families, the state has issued 1.24 crore BPL cards. Narly 7.8 lakh beneficiaries have been flagged as suspicious.
- The state plans to revise the Rs 1.2 lakh annual income ceiling for ration card eligibility, acknowledging that the limit fixed in 2017 is outdated.

Rising UV levels lead to spike in skin, eye issues

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

With the Ultra Violet (UV) index in Bengaluru touching an extreme level of 13 this year, doctors in the city are urging residents to take precautions against prolonged sun exposure, warning that intense UV radiation can cause both immediate and long-term health problems.

UV levels above 8 are considered harmful, as they can cause significant skin and eye damage, including sunburn, cataracts and dehydration. Explaining the unusual spike, Dr GK Balakrishna, HOD and senior consultant, internal medicine at Gleneagles BGS Hospital, Kengeri, said, as Bengaluru is at an elevation, we are closer to sun exposure too.

Dermatologists in the city say clinics are already seeing patients with heat-related skin problems. Dr Safia Tanyeem, a consultant dermatologist at Apollo Medical Centre, said acute exposure to UV rays can cause several immediate skin conditions. The acute effects on skin include sunburn, itching, redness, oozing lesions and even allergic reactions.

UV exposure can also lead to tanning and aggravate conditions such as Photomelanosis (Hyperpigmentation) and Photodermatitis, she said. In the long run, it can speed up the ageing process by increasing wrinkles and fine lines, and aggravate melasma and freckles.

While it is not very common, there is also a possibility of skin cancer due to increased UV exposure, she said, adding that patients started visiting clinics as early as the second half of February.

Eye specialists also warn that UV radiation can affect vision, both in the short and long terms. Dr V Preethi, Medical Superintendent at Nethradhama Super Speciality Eye Hospital, Yelahanka, explained that short-term exposure to intense UV rays can lead to conditions such as Photokeratitis and Photoconjunctivitis. These can occur even after brief exposure and cause symptoms like redness, light sensitivity, grittiness and the sensation of a foreign body in the eye, she said.

Prolonged exposure to UV radiation can lead to more serious eye problems, including Pterygium (tissue growth over the cornea), Pinguecula (conjunctival bumps), corneal degeneration and accelerated cataract formation. Chronic exposure can also damage the retina and increase the risk of age-related macular degeneration, she said.

Solar Retinopathy

Direct sun-gazing can burn the retina and cause solar retinopathy. Long-term exposure can even lead to eyelid cancers such as basal or squamous cell carcinoma, Dr V Preethi, Medical Superintendent at Nethradhama Super Speciality Eye Hospital, Yelahanka added.

Central circular: 'Fears of closure of paramed colleges in state'

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil has expressed concern that there is a fear of closure of paramedical colleges in the state due to the circular issued by the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP).

During the zero hour of the Legislative Council session, member Ivan D'Souza raised the issue and said that students who want to join the paramedical course are facing difficulties. Till now, there was an opportunity to get training in the medical field after SSLC. But now the rule that only those who have passed the science stream in the second PUC will be admitted has started a new educational crisis, he said.

The commission wrote to the UGC on January 2, stating that it has now made it mandatory to have completed PUC science for admission to paramedical courses across the country. It has been suggested that this new rule be implemented from the year 2026-27 itself. With this, there are currently 640 paramedical educational institutions in

the state, including 32 government and 608 private colleges. Ivan D'Souza expressed concern that if the new rule is implemented, there will be a shortage of eligible candidates for 450 to 500 colleges.

Responding to this, Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said that there is a fear of closure of paramedical colleges in the state due to the NCAHP circular. Thousands of students in the state used to opt for this course after SSLC and get admission every year. Now science has to be taken in PUC. The Center has taken the initiative to implement the same rule for diploma courses across the country. We have spoken to the chairman of the commission about simplification in the rule. He has promised to call a meeting and discuss this, he said.

No gas supply to hotels at the moment: Min

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has once again given a shock to the hotel industry, which has been reeling from the Middle East conflict. Minister KH Muniyappa said that there is currently no supply of gas (LPG Shortage) to hotels.

Speaking to the media after an important meeting with oil supply companies today, he said, the Chief Minister is writing a second letter. The situation is serious. The central government should pay more attention. A meeting was held today with the secretary, commissioner and heads of oil companies."

The meeting lasted for an hour. We appeal to the consumers not to panic unnecessarily. Do not double-book gas. Use it sparingly. Ship movement has started. It has been agreed to provide 100 percent cylinders to hospitals, educational institutions, airlines, and railway canteens. The center has approved the daily expenditure of six and a half thousand cylinders. Of this, it has been decided to supply 4200 cylinders to the essential sector, he said.

4200+1200 are being supplied to hospitals, educational institutions, Indira Canteens, 5200 to the Essential Services sector, 2250 cylinders are being supplied to autos. There is no supply to hotels at present.

HC upholds validity of Lokayukta queries, reverses ruling on bias

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A division bench of Hgh Court has restored a legal provision that allows KPTCL (Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Ltd) to entrust its disciplinary inquiries to Lokayukta. In the judgment delivered recently, it reversed a single-bench decision that struck down regulation 14(A) of the Karnataka Electricity Board (KEB) Regulations on grounds of real likelihood of bias. The regulation in question enables KPTCL to entrust disciplinary inquiries against its employees to Lokayukta. Allowing a writ appeal filed by Lokayukta, the division bench comprising Justices DK Singh and S Rachaiah held that there was no statutory bar preventing the investigation and subsequent inquiry by the same institution, especially when there were different wings involved.

On October 16, 2024, the single bench declared Regulation 14(A) of the KEB Regulations unconstitutional and quashed the Lokayukta recommendations to impose compulsory retirement on Reddy, citing a real likelihood of bias. It stated that once Lokayukta formed an opinion

recommending disciplinary action, it could not thereafter function as an impartial enquiry authority, creating a structural defect in holding the inquiry in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution of India.

The single bench also held that Lokayukta could not don both the roles of prosecutor in a criminal case and an inquiry officer in disciplinary proceedings. After perusing the provisions of the Lokayukta Act, the division bench noted that the inquiry officers in the institution of Lokayukta were all judicial officers deputed under the Karnataka Lokayukta (Cadre and Recruitment and Conditions of Service of the Officers and Employees) Rules, 1988.It said that suggestions by the single bench that the inquiry officers would be biased and would not act independently, unfairly cast doubt on their integrity and functional ability to inquire into the allegations in the domestic inquiry against a delinquent public servant.

Karnataka to regulate private hospital charges

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The state government is taking steps to regulate the functioning, treatment fees and prices of private medical institutions. In this regard, the Health Department has prepared a draft bill, the Karnataka Private Medical Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The high treatment fees charged by private medical institutions are constantly coming under public criticism. The high fees have made healthcare services unaffordable.

The public is facing a huge burden due to the unrestricted treatment fees. Private hospitals are making it unaffordable for the poor by charging exorbitant fees. Despite repeated public demands to curb the high fees charged by private hospitals, the government has not been able to control it.

In 2016, when Ramesh Kumar was the Health Minister, the government had come forward to crack down on the extravagance of private hospitals. It was ready to bring a law with rules to curb expensive fees, bring transparency, and display price lists. However, due to huge opposition, its implementation could not be done as expected. Now, the government has come forward to bring a new law, which has come forward to control and monitor the treatment fees, rates, and functioning of private hospitals.

The proposed Karnataka Private Medical Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2026 has provided for the state government to constitute a separate expert committee to recommend the range of treatment fees and fees of private hospitals. Through this, rules have been made to restrict the practice of private hospitals fixing arbitrary fees.

The proposed amendment bill provides that the State Government may constitute separate expert committees to recommend a range of rates for different categories or tiers of private medical institutions. The composition, powers and responsibilities of these expert committees and the terms and conditions of service of the members of the committee shall be as prescribed from time to time.

FAST & FABULOUS TO VIE

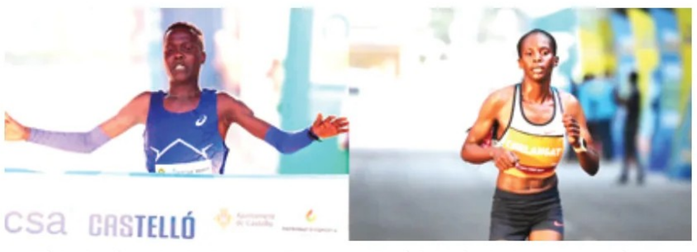
Global stars to chase glory in TCSW10K Marathon

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The 18th edition of the TCS World 10K Marathon will be held on April 26, and the world's best runners will descend on the Silicon City of Bengaluru.

Ugandan rising star Herbert Kibet (20) in the men's category and Sarah Chelangat in the women's category have their eyes on the title.

Kibet captured the world's attention this year in the race held in Castellon, Spain, by finishing in 26:39 minutes.



This is the sixth fastest time ever. Reacting to this, Kibet expressed confidence, This is my first time coming to India. I am aiming to achieve the maximum in the Bengaluru race, which has been accredited by the World Athletics Gold Label, has a total prize money of 2,10,000 US dollars.

Kibet will face strong competition from Ethiopia's Khairi Bejiga (26:51 minutes), Burundi's Rodrigues Kwijera and Ethiopia's Gemechu Dida. Along with them, two-time world 5,000m champion Muktar Idris is also in the fray. Another special feature is that 11 athletes who have completed the race in less than 27:38 minutes, the current course record in Bengaluru, are competing this time.

The defending champion in the women's category, Ugandan Sarah Chelangat, won the title last year by finishing in 31:07 minutes. If Sarah wins this time too, she will become the second runner after Agnes Tirop (2018-19) to win the title twice in a row. "Bengaluru and this race are close to my heart. I am excited to win again in this beautiful city," she said.

Sarah will face stiff competition from Kenyan runners. Kenyans have won 10 of the 15 women's titles so far. Valencia 10K winner Brenda Jepchirchir (29:25 minutes), 2024 Bengaluru champion Lilian Rengeruk Kasit, and world steeplechase record holder Beatrice Chepkoch are other key contenders. Cynthia Chepungeno, who won silver medal last time, will also add to the excitement of the race.

QUICK READ

Leopard footprints found in Jevargi Village; Residents Panic

Kalaburagi

Panic gripped residents of Sonna village in Jevargi taluk after a leopard was reportedly spotted in the area. According to villagers, the leopard entered the village late at night and attacked a dog, creating fear among the local residents. Following the incident, villagers immediately informed the Forest Department about the suspected presence of the animal. Forest officials visited the spot and conducted an inspection.

During the inspection, leopard footprints were found in the area. Officials confirmed that the attack on the dog was likely carried out by a leopard. The incident has caused concern among the villagers, who fear that the animal may still be roaming nearby. Residents have urged the Forest Department to take immediate action to capture the leopard and ensure the safety of people in the village.

Youth hacked to death with axe in Raichur village

Raichur

A 23-year-old youth was allegedly hacked to death with an axe in Bullapur village of Raichur taluk, reportedly due to an old enmity. The deceased has been identified as Pranesh (23), a resident of Bullapur village. The accused in the case have been identified as Prasad, Mallesh, Mallikarjun and Amaresh, all residents of Dinni village. According to police sources, the incident occurred while a local 'Nyaya Panchayat' was being held in Bullapur village regarding a land dispute. During the discussion, the accused allegedly attacked Pranesh with an axe in front of his mother. Pranesh sustained severe injuries in the attack and was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital.

Centre's policies responsible for gas shortage: Eshwar Khandre

Khandre said poor Centre policies have caused LPG shortages, forcing people nationwide to endure long queues for cooking gas

BIDAR

Karnataka Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister and Bidar district in-charge minister Eshwar Khandre on Sunday criticised the BJP-led Central government, alleging that its wrong policies and failed foreign policy have led to difficulties for the common people, particularly in the supply of LPG cylinders.

Speaking to the media in Bidar, Khandre said the situation in the country has become concerning as people in many places are struggling even to obtain cooking gas. He alleged that due to the Centre's poor planning and policy failures, people are now being forced to stand in long queues to get LPG cylinders.

"The Central government is directly responsible for the present situation. They failed to plan in advance and did not take precautionary measures to ensure adequate supply. Because of their wrong foreign policy, the gas supply situation has been affected, and people are facing serious hardships," he said.

Khandre further stated that there is growing fear and uncertainty among the public about the future availability of other essential fuels as well. "If this situation continues, we do not know what will happen to the supply of diesel and petrol in the coming days. There is anxiety among the public regarding fuel availability," he added.

Referring to the upcoming Assembly elections in five states, the minister said the elections are very important in the current political scenario. According to him, the people should use the opportunity to express their opinion on the policies of the Central government.

"The people must teach a lesson to this anti-people government at the Centre. These five state elections are crucial, and it is important that the Congress returns to power in these states," he said.

Khandre expressed confidence that secular forces would gain greater support in the elections. He said the Congress and its allies are hopeful of performing well in several states.

"I am confident that in states like Assam and West Bengal, and especially in Kerala, the United Democratic Front will emerge victorious. Secular forces will receive stronger support from the people in these elections," he said.

The minister said the outcome of the elections would reflect the people's response to the policies of the Central government and their expectations for better governance.

Release of funds for statues an election gimmick: Charantimath

BAGALKOT

Charantimath stated statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Basaveshwara were ready, no government funds were requested, but Siddaramaiah approved ₹40 lakhs each, citing by-election motives.

Former BJP MLA candidate from Bagalkot, Dr. Veeranna Charantimath, has alleged that the State Government's decision to release ₹40 lakh each for the installation of statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Basaveshwara in Bagalkot is merely a by-election gimmick.

Speaking at a press conference in Bagalkot city, Charantimath said that statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Basaveshwara are already ready and kept in a godown, and that no demand had been made for government funds for the purpose. He alleged that a non-administrative person had written a letter seeking funds for the statues and that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah approved the proposal and sanctioned ₹40 lakh each. According to him, the move was made only with the upcoming by-election in mind.

Charantimath further claimed that earlier the installation of the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was not permitted and that the statue had even been kept in a police station at one point. He termed the incident as an insult to the community by the Congress government. He accused the ruling party of attempting to gain political advantage ahead of the Bagalkot by-election through such announcements.

Ramzan's Dawat-e-Iftar held at Jama Masjid in Bidar

BIDAR

A Dawat-e-Iftar gathering was organized at Jama Masjid, bringing together political leaders, officials, religious heads, and a large number of local residents. The event was hosted by Minister Raheem Khan and witnessed significant public participation.

District in-charge minister Eshwar Khandre attended the programme as the chief guest. He was accompanied by Bidar Superintendent of Police Pradeep Gunti and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Dr. Girish Badole. Several religious leaders and community representatives were also present on the occasion. The Iftar programme was organized as part of the ongoing holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims observe fasting from dawn to dusk. The gathering aimed to promote communal harmony, brotherhood, and unity among people of different communities.

A large number of local residents gathered at the mosque premises to take part in the Iftar meal. Community members, youth volunteers, and organizers made elaborate arrangements to serve food and refreshments to the attendees. The atmosphere at the venue reflected the spirit of togetherness and mutual respect that the holy month symbolizes.

Speaking on the occasion, leaders emphasized the importance of maintaining peace, harmony, and mutual respect among all communities. They also highlighted that such gatherings strengthen social bonds and provide an opportunity for people from different backgrounds to come together. Minister Raheem Khan welcomed the dignitaries and thanked the public for their participation in the programme. He said that the Dawat-e-Iftar event was organized to share the spirit of Ramadan and to encourage unity and goodwill in society.

The presence of senior officials, religious leaders, and hundreds of local residents added significance to the event, making it a notable gathering in Bidar during the holy month. The programme concluded with prayers for peace, prosperity, and harmony in the region.

BJP postpones protest to March 31 in Kalaburagi: Avvanna Makkery

KALABURAGI

The protest titled "Remove District In-charge Minister Priyank Kharge – Save Kalaburagi", which was planned by the BJP against various issues in the district, has been postponed to March 31 due to technical reasons, said BJP Backward Morcha State General Secretary Avvanna Makkery.

Addressing a press conference, he alleged that several problems have increased in the district over the past two years, but the government has failed to respond effectively. He said there has been significant delay from the district administration in matters such as crop insurance for farmers and compensation related to land acquisition, causing hardship to the public.

However, he claimed that the district in-charge minister and other elected representatives have not responded to the grievances of the people.

Bagalkot by-election: notification issued, polling on April 9

BAGALKOT

The district administration has kicked off preparations for the by-election in the Bagalkot Assembly constituency following the sudden demise of MLA H.Y. Meti. Deputy Commissioner Sangappa announced the election schedule and arrangements during a press conference at the District Administration Building in Bagalkot city.

The official election notification was issued on March 16. Candidates can file nominations until March 23, with scrutiny set for March 24. March 26 is the last date to withdraw nominations. Polling will take place on April 9, while vote counting is scheduled for May 4.

To facilitate smooth voting, 319 polling stations have been set up across the constituency, including 143 in urban areas and 176 in rural parts. Bagalkote has a total of 2,59,260 registered voters, comprising 1,26,761 males, 1,32,476 females, and 23 voters in the 'others' category.

The administration will use 517 VVPAT machines alongside electronic voting machines to ensure transparency. A workforce of 9,597 personnel has been deployed to manage polling operations, security, and monitoring.

To curb illegal activities, 24 check posts have been established across the district, monitoring the movement of cash, liquor, gifts, and other items that could influence voters. Mudhol, Terdal, and Jamakhandi each have three check posts, Bilagi three, Badami four, Bagalkot four, and Hungund four.

The maximum expenditure limit for each candidate is fixed at ₹40 lakhs, as per Election Commission guidelines. Deputy Commissioner Sangappa urged citizens to actively participate in ensuring free and fair elections. Complaints about violations of the Model Code of Conduct can be filed through the eVIGIL mobile application for quick action.

Officials assured that all measures are in place to conduct the by-election in a peaceful, transparent, and efficient manner. Citizens are encouraged to cast their votes responsibly and help maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

Teacher Deepa Receives District-Level 'Guru Sarvottama' Award

KALABURAGI

In recognition of her dedicated service in the field of education and her continuous efforts to improve the academic progress of rural students, Deepa Mallikarjun Kattimani, a graduate teacher at the Government Higher Primary School in Karakihalli village of Jevargi taluk, has been awarded the district-level 'Guru Sarvottama' Award for the year 2025–26. The award has been conferred by the Karnataka State (6–8) Graduate Primary Teachers' Association (Regd.), Bengaluru, in association with its Kalaburagi district unit.

Deepa, who has completed a decade in the teaching profession, has been widely appreciated for her commitment and innovative teaching methods. Since the beginning of her career, she has worked with dedication to enhance the quality of education and encourage greater student participation in rural schools. She has also played a key role in increasing school enrolment and introducing modern teaching practices to make learning more engaging for students. In addition, she actively involved local villagers in efforts to improve the school's infrastructure and overall development, setting an example for community participation in education. The award was presented to her during the State-level GPT Teachers' Conference and Award Ceremony, where her contribution to the education sector was recognized and appreciated.

By-elections seen as political test for Yatnal

VIJAYAPURA

With the Election Commission announcing by-elections for Bagalkote and Davanagere South Assembly constituencies, all eyes are on Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and his potential role in the contests. Polling is scheduled for April 9, with counting of votes on May 4. The Bagalkote seat fell vacant after the demise of MLA H.Y. Meti, while Davanagere South became vacant following the death of senior leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

The notification process is underway, with March 23 set as the last day for filing nominations and March 26 for withdrawal. Both the BJP and Congress have already started preparations for what is expected to be a direct fight between the two parties.

Meanwhile, political attention has shifted to Yatnal, who was expelled from the BJP earlier. Party workers and observers are curious to see if he will field candidates under his proposed JCB platform. Known for his outspoken criticism of BJP state leadership and the Yediyurappa family, Yatnal has repeatedly hinted at forming his own political front. He has also demanded the removal of BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra, though the central leadership has not responded to his statements. Yatnal's recent high-profile son's wedding has further fueled speculation about whether he will use the by-elections to test his political strength. Regions like Bagalkote and Davanagere have significant support for him, and any candidates fielded by him could challenge the mainstream BJP and influence outcomes.

Yatnal has publicly claimed he aims to become Chief Minister in 2028 and has hinted that a JCB platform could indirectly benefit the Congress. He has also suggested he might return to the BJP if offered the Chief Minister post. Political observers say the by-elections are a critical stage for Yatnal to showcase his influence. Whether he actively contests through the JCB platform or stays neutral will unfold in the coming days, keeping the state's political scene on edge.

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT IN PLACE

Bagalkot officials remove political banners ahead of election

BAGALKOT

Following the announcement of the by-election date and the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, officials of the Bagalkot Municipal Council launched a drive to remove flex banners, portraits of political leaders, and government advertisement boards from various parts of the city.

Municipal staff carried out the operation across several prominent locations in Bagalkot. Flex banners, posters, and hoardings displaying photographs of political leaders, as well as nameplates related to government advertisements, were removed from public places. The drive was conducted particularly around major junctions, roadsides, and public areas including in front of the district administration building.

According to officials, once the Model Code of Conduct comes into force after the announcement of election dates, political parties and leaders are not allowed to display promotional materials such as flex banners, posters, or hoardings in public places. In compliance with these rules, the district administration directed the municipal council to remove all such materials immediately.

Municipal workers began the clearance operation early in the day and inspected several major roads and public spaces. During the drive, banners and hoardings installed by various political groups and organizations were taken down. Government advertisement boards that contained photographs of political leaders and dignitaries were also removed as part of the operation.

Officials said the aim of the drive is to ensure strict implementation of the Model Code of Conduct and maintain neutrality in public spaces during the election period. The removal process covered areas near government offices, public buildings, and busy intersections to ensure that no political promotional materials remain visible.

Meanwhile, a similar flex clearance operation was also carried out in Jamkhandi city. Municipal council officials there removed banners and flex boards installed in different parts of the town, including those displaying government advertisements featuring political leaders and other dignitaries.

Authorities stated that inspection drives will continue in the coming days to identify and remove any remaining banners or posters that violate election guidelines. Officials have also appealed to the public and political parties to cooperate with the administration and follow the Model Code of Conduct during the election period.

QUICK READ

Strict rules enforced around SSLC exam centres

Gadag

The Karnataka School Examination and Evaluation Board will hold the SSLC Annual Examination-1 from March 18 to April 2, between 10.30 am and 1.15 pm. To ensure discipline and prevent cheating, a 200-meter area around 61 exam centres has been declared prohibited. Only examinees and staff can enter. Groups over five, loudspeakers, and nearby shops like Xerox and book stalls will be restricted. Media can film only during student arrival and departure, not inside exam rooms. Mobile phones and communication devices are banned for students and staff, except the chief superintendent's non-camera phone.

Free skill training opens doors for rural youth

Koppal

Canara Bank Deshpande RSET Institute, Haliyal, has invited applications for a 30-day free training programme in refrigeration, air conditioning, and sheep farming. The training will begin in April and is aimed at unemployed rural youth and women aged between 18 and 50. Participants will receive free food and accommodation during the course. The programme will cover practical skills, motivation sessions, entrepreneurship guidance, market surveys, sales techniques, and project report preparation. Trainees will also learn about government schemes, bank loans, soft skills, and yoga. Interested candidates can register before March 30 by contacting the institute in Haliyal, Uttara Kannada district.

Meeting planned to celebrate two great leaders

Gadag

A preparatory meeting will be held on March 17 to plan the birth anniversary celebrations of Babu Jagjivan Ram and B. R. Ambedkar. The meeting will take place at 3 pm in the auditorium hall of the District Collector's Office under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner. Officials from district and taluk levels, community leaders, and members of the public have been invited to attend. The discussion will focus on organizing the celebrations scheduled for April 5 and April 14. The Social Welfare Department urged everyone to arrive on time and share suggestions for meaningful and respectful programmes during the upcoming Jayanti events.

Over one lakh cases settled in Haveri courts

Family reconciliations in Haveri courts involved multiple couples, with Judge Devindrappa praising collaboration among bar associations, officials, police, and participants

HAVERI

The National Court of Appeal held in Haveri district successfully resolved a large number of pending cases, including pre-litigation matters. Principal District and Sessions Judge and District Legal Services Authority Chairman Biradar Devindrappa N. announced that out of 1,24,057 cases identified for settlement, 1,10,876 cases were resolved, involving a total amount of ₹56,83,18,798. Remarkably, 15 family disputes were also reconciled, allowing couples to reunite.

Among regular court cases, 6,387 pending matters were considered, of which 5,400 were settled, amounting to ₹29,15,37,575. In pre-litigation cases, 1,17,670 matters were addressed, with 1,05,476 successfully settled, totaling ₹27,67,81,223. One notable case, Execution No. 19/2020 in the District Principal Senior Civil Judge and J.M.F.C. Court at Ranebennur, which had been pending for over five years, was also resolved through conciliation.

The family reconciliations included six couples in Haveri District Family Court, three in Ranebennur, and two each in Byadgi, Hanagal, and Shiggaon. Judge Devindrappa credited the success to the active cooperation of the District Bar Association, Taluka Bar Associations, judges, prosecutors, police, other department officials, and the parties themselves. Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, Mrs. Srishailaja, was also present on the occasion. The National Court of Appeal's session has been described as highly successful, setting a record in the district for case settlements and promoting peaceful resolution of family and civil disputes.

Women resource center inaugurated on Women's Day

MANGALURU

A new Women Resource Center was inaugurated in the city as part of the International Women's Day celebrations. The center has been set up at the District Women Empowerment Unit under the Women and Child Development Department.

The facility was established with support from the Corporate Social Responsibility fund of Muthoot Finance and has been equipped with modern facilities to help women access information, guidance and support services.

Speaking at the event, Muthoot Finance Regional Manager Prashant Naik said that women today are achieving success in many fields such as education, science, politics, sports and business. He said Women's Day is not just a celebration but also a reminder to work towards ending violence against women and ensuring equal opportunities in society.

Deputy Director of the Women and Child Development Department Usman A said that the day should inspire society to promote equality and respect for women. He added that true progress can be achieved only when government departments and organizations work together for women's empowerment.

Deputy Director Usman A emphasized promoting women's equality, empowerment, and development, while Muthoot Finance's Prasad Kumar highlighted utilizing CSR initiatives and available training, welfare, and support programs

He explained that the Women Resource Center will help women in the district by providing information about training programs, development opportunities and welfare schemes.

Muthoot Finance CSR Manager Prasad Kumar also spoke on the occasion and said the organization supports several social initiatives through its corporate responsibility programs. He encouraged people and institutions to make good use of such opportunities.

During the event, officials and guests highlighted the importance of empowering women and creating awareness about their rights and opportunities.

On the occasion, eight children who achieved success in different fields were honored with the Hoysala Keladi Award in recognition of their achievements and talents.

LPG tanker overturns near Udupi, traffic diverted

UDUPI

A tanker carrying LPG gas overturned on National Highway 66 near Katapady on the outskirts of Udupi, causing a gas leak and raising safety concerns. The incident occurred at a stretch of the highway where ongoing road work made the area narrow. Immediately after the accident, the site was tense as locals and commuters feared a possible explosion.

Fire brigade personnel rushed to the scene and quickly began safety operations. Water was poured on the tanker as a precaution to prevent any fire or further hazards. No casualties were reported, but authorities warned people to maintain distance from the tanker. District Collector Swaroop T.K. ordered a diversion of vehicular traffic to ensure smooth movement and safety. Vehicles traveling from Mangalore to Udupi are advised to use alternate routes via Kapu-Shirva-Moodubelle-Manipal or Padubidri-Belman-Shirva-Manipal. Those traveling from Udupi to Mangalore should take Manipal-Manipur-Moodubelle-Shirva-Kapu or Manipal-Shirva-Belman-Padubidri routes. The collector's notification was issued under Rule 115 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and Rule 221 5(a) of the Karnataka Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

Authorities from the fire brigade, police, and district administration are closely monitoring the situation. Citizens are urged to follow the diversion routes and avoid the accident site until the tanker is safely cleared. Emergency measures remain in place to prevent any further risk from the LPG leakage.

Collector urged complaint resolution, ensuring LPG delivery compliance with 2000 regulations, warning strict action against defaulters

Helpline launched to solve LPG cylinder issues

GADAG

The district administration has launched a special helpline system to address problems related to LPG cylinder supply and customer complaints across the district. District Collector C.N. Sridhara announced the initiative during a meeting with owners of gas distribution agencies held at the district administration office. The move aims to help consumers facing issues such as delay in cylinder delivery, extra charges, or non-availability of LPG cylinders even after booking. The Collector said the administration will respond quickly to complaints and ensure that consumers receive proper service.

He explained that LPG supply must follow the Liquified Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000. If any distributor fails to follow the rules or if customers face problems, strict action will be taken by the district administration.

Consumers from different taluks and urban areas can contact officials through the helpline numbers provided. Customers in Gadag urban area can reach the Assistant Director (Food), while those in rural areas can contact the Food Inspector. Separate contact numbers have also been provided for Rona, Naragund, Gajendragarh, Mundargi, Shirahatti and Lakshmeshwara taluks. Officials also reminded consumers that LPG cylinders should normally be delivered within 25 days after booking. If there are delays or extra charges, people can immediately register complaints through the helpline.

Consumers can also use digital services such as IVRS, missed call, WhatsApp, mobile apps, PhonePe, Paytm and the OMC portal to book LPG cylinders easily.

Major job fair to be held in Koppal

KOPPAL

A large-scale job fair will be held at the Government First Grade College in Koppal on March 17, organized jointly by the Department of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, the Sanjeevini-Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Campaign, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Rural Skill Scheme, Zilla Panchayat, District Skill Mission, District Employment Exchange Center, and District Industrial Center.

The program will begin at 10 am with the inauguration by Thangadgi Shivaraj Sangappa, Minister for Backward Classes Welfare, Kannada and Culture, and Koppal District In-charge Minister. Other dignitaries attending include Sharanprakash Rudrappa Patil, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods, Priyanka Kharge, Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, and Doddanagouda Hanumagouda Patil, Chief Whip of the Opposition and Kushtagi MLA. Basavaraj Rayareddy, Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister and Yelaburga MLA, will also be present. Koppal MLA K. Raghavendra Hitnal will preside over the event.

NATIONAL VACCINATION DAY PROGRAM HELD IN GADAG

GADAG

National Vaccination Day was celebrated successfully at the Taluk Health Officer's office in Gadag with the aim of spreading awareness about the importance of immunization and public health.

The program was inaugurated by Taluk Health Officer Dr. Preet Khona. Speaking on the occasion, he said that National Vaccination Day highlights the importance of vaccines in protecting people from dangerous diseases. He explained that the vaccination program in India began in the 1950s and was later revised in 1985, when it was renamed the Universal Immunization Program. He added that the program has grown stronger over the years with several improvements. He also called on health workers and the public to support the newly introduced HPV vaccination program.

Field Health Education Officer Dr. Rajendra S. Gadada delivered a special lecture during the program. He said vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent infectious diseases. He noted that oral polio vaccination started in India on March 16, 1995, and since then the day has been observed every year as National Vaccination Day to create awareness about immunization. City Health Center Medical Officer Dr. M.D. Balaganur attended the event as the chief guest and spoke on the importance of vaccination. The program began with a prayer by Primary Health Protection Officer C.H. Thotada. Primary Health Protection Officer G.M. Kumbara hosted the event, and Taluk Senior Health Protection Officer S.S. Kattimani delivered the vote of thanks.

Koppal activists plan Bangalore Protest on March 22

KOPPAL

On the 136th day of their protest, Koppal activists announced a major march to Bangalore on March 22. Allama Prabhu Bettadoor, convener of the joint action platform, called for supporters to travel by bus from the dharna site at 10 pm. The aim is to raise awareness about the Baldota issue and demand government action. The activists plan a hunger strike at Bangalore's Independence Park on March 23 to press their demands. Bettadoor warned that if the government does not respond, future actions could include blocking trains and highways. Women participants will travel on separate buses, and all attendees are asked to register via a WhatsApp group.

Several prominent figures joined the dharna, including Mallikarjuna B., retired principal V.B. Raddera, Dr. Basavaraj Poojara, and others from environmental and social organizations. The movement highlights growing local unrest and organized efforts to influence government decisions.

Lok Adalat settles nearly fifty thousand cases

KOPPAL

A large number of disputes were resolved through mutual agreement during the Lok Adalat held at courts in Gangavathi, Kushtagi and Yelaburga of Koppal district. The event was organised by the District Legal Services Authority to encourage peaceful settlement of cases without long court procedures.

One of the most touching outcomes of the Lok Adalat was that seven couples decided to reunite after resolving their differences. With guidance from mediators, lawyers and judges, the husbands and wives agreed to live together again, setting aside their disputes.

According to official information, a total of 5,123 pending court cases were taken up during the Lok Adalat. These included matters related to insurance claims, water bills, bank loans, house taxes, domestic violence, alimony, cheque bounce cases, birth and death registration issues, civil disputes, criminal matters and motor vehicle accident claims. Out of these, 3,032 cases were successfully settled through compromise.

In addition, 52,194 pre-litigation cases were also considered. These cases mainly involved issues such as insurance matters, water tax dues and motor vehicle accident claims. Among them, 46,921 cases were resolved through mutual settlement.

Overall, out of 57,316 cases taken up during the Lok Adalat, a total of 49,953 cases were settled in a single day. The total value of the resolved cases was estimated at ₹44,44,49,017, according to officials.

KANNADA PRIDE SHOWCASE

Kannadigas Cultural Conference celebrated with festivities

BICHOLIM

The 16th Goa Kannadigas Cultural Conference was held with great enthusiasm at the Hira Bai Memorial Hall in Bicholim city of Goa. The event brought together Kannada speakers and cultural groups to celebrate the rich heritage of the Kannada language and culture.

The conference was organized jointly by Karmabhoomi Kannada Sangha of Bicholim and Karnataka Jagruti Vedike of Bengaluru. A grand procession marked the beginning of the event, where about 751 women participated carrying traditional pots. Several cultural troupes also joined the procession, creating a festive atmosphere in the city.

Conference president and noted Kannada thinker Dr. Sangana Basappa Biradar spoke about the historical importance of the Kannada language. He said Kannada is one of India's ancient classical languages with a strong literary tradition and a proud history. He also noted that Kannada literature has received eight Jnanpith awards, bringing pride to millions of Kannada speakers.

Dr. Biradar expressed happiness at the warm welcome given by Kannadigas living in Goa. He said their unity and love for their language helped make the conference a grand success.

Various cultural programs entertained the audience during the event. Performances included Dollu Kunita, Veeragase dance, Kolata, Bharatanatyam, and several folk dances by artists from Bengaluru, Hubballi, Tumakuru, Raichur, Belagavi, and other places. Thousands of spectators from Goa watched the colorful performances.

Kannada flags were displayed across the main roads of Bicholim, creating a festive environment. A silver chariot carrying a portrait of Goddess Bhuvaneshwari was also part of the procession.

Several achievers from different fields were honored with the Karunada Awards during the conference.

Many public representatives, cultural leaders, and Kannada supporters from Karnataka and Goa attended the conference. Organizers thanked all participants for making the cultural event memorable and successful.

QUICK READ

Preparations begin for celebrating two leaders' birthdays

VIJAYAPURA

A preparatory meeting will be held on March 24 at 11 am in the District Collector's Office Hall to plan the celebrations of Babu Jagjivan Ram's 119th and B. R. Ambedkar's 135th birth anniversaries on April 5, 2026. The meeting will be chaired by the District Collector and will include district officials, community leaders, and dignitaries. The Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department has urged attendees to actively participate and share suggestions to organize meaningful and respectful programmes for these important Jayanti celebrations.

Applications open for Additional Government Advocates

CHITRADURGA

The District Collector's office has invited applications for the post of Additional Government Advocate in the Senior Courts of Hosadurga and Hiriyur Taluk. The appointment will be for three years or until further orders under Karnataka Law Officers Rules, 1977. Advocates with at least seven years of legal practice can apply by April 6, 5.30 pm, submitting the prescribed form and relevant documents. Interested candidates can obtain the application form and details from the District Collector's office during working hours. This move aims to fill vacancies following the expiry of previous appointments and ensure smooth court functioning.

Social media star fined for unsafe triple riding

DODDABALLAPUR

Doddaballapur Rural Police have fined Manjunath, popularly known as Bunro on social media, for riding a bike with two passengers without wearing a helmet. The incident came to light after Manju posted a reel showing himself riding triple, which caught the attention of traffic authorities. Police immediately called him to the station and issued a fine for violating traffic rules. Manju admitted his mistake and urged his followers to always wear helmets and follow safety rules. "I shouldn't have ridden triple without a helmet. Family and others trust us to be careful," he said.

The case highlights the growing need for road safety awareness, especially among young social media influencers who often try risky stunts for attention. Authorities continue to remind citizens that following traffic laws protects lives and prevents accidents on busy roads.

Women's sports meet held with enthusiasm

G. Prabhu celebrated district's first women's sports meet, highlighting women's equal roles and contributions in society

CHIKKABALLAPURA

A women's sports meet was organized with great enthusiasm at the Sir M. Visvesvaraya District Stadium in the city as part of the International Women's Day celebrations. Deputy Commissioner G. Prabhu inaugurated the event and encouraged women to take part in sports activities.

The sports meet was jointly organized by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Women and Child Development Department, and the Youth Empowerment and Sports Department.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner G. Prabhu said it was a matter of pride to inaugurate the first sports meet for women in the district. He expressed hope that the event would be organized on a larger and more meaningful scale in the coming years.

He said women play many important roles in society as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. Women form nearly half of the population and are contributing equally with men in administration, employment, and various other fields. Therefore, society must respect and appreciate their efforts, he added.

The Deputy Commissioner said the sports meet was organized to encourage women to participate in physical activities and to identify hidden sports talents in the district. He noted that regular sports activities help improve both physical and mental health.

During the program, a special pledge was administered to mark Women's Day. The Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat also participated in a shot put event to motivate the participants.

Several sports competitions were conducted as part of the event, with women from different departments and self help groups taking part with great enthusiasm.

Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Panchayat Dr. Y. Naveen Bhat and other officials attended the program.

Youth need skill training for better jobs: Dr. Kumar

MANDYA

Dr. Kumar chaired the District Skill Committee meeting, where officials discussed enhancing youth employment through industry-aligned training programs, emphasizing coordination for effective skill development and job opportunities

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kumar has called for stronger efforts to provide free skill training and self employment guidance to young people in the district. He said training programs should be designed according to the interests and abilities of youth so they can find suitable jobs.Dr. Kumar spoke while chairing the District Skill Committee progress review meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's office. Officials from different departments attended the meeting and discussed ways to improve employment opportunities for young people. The Deputy Commissioner said that skill development has become very important in today's changing job market. He advised officials to organize training programs that match the needs of industries and modern workplaces. He also stressed the importance of coordinating with industries while planning training programs so that trained youth can easily find employment.Dr. Kumar suggested that technical and industrial skills should be provided to youth under government schemes such as Yuvanidhi and Yuvanidhi Plus. These programs aim to equip young people with practical skills that can help them secure jobs or start their own businesses.He also emphasized the need to provide spoken English training through different organizations. According to him, improving communication skills can help youth get better job opportunities in various sectors.The Deputy Commissioner further said that special training programs should be arranged for specially gifted individuals so they can also benefit from employment opportunities.He directed officials to conduct social and economic surveys under the SVANIDHI scheme and link street vendors with central government social security programs. He also asked departments to create awareness among vendors about digital literacy and online services.

Judge M. Vijay said rise in online shopping increases fraud risks and urged consumers to stay cautious and file complaints through consumer forums or official online platforms

AWARENESS KEY TO PREVENT RISING ONLINE CONSUMER FRAUD

CHITRADURGA

Legal awareness is very important to protect people from online fraud, said District Legal Services Authority Member Secretary and Senior Civil Judge M. Vijay during a World Consumer Day program held in the city.The event was organized at Government Arts College under the theme "Safe Products, Confident Consumers." It was jointly conducted by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Food and Civil Supplies Department, District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Legal Metrology Department, Food Safety Department, District Bar Association, and gas distributors.Speaking at the program, Judge M. Vijay said shopping habits have changed greatly over the last decade. Earlier, people visited shops and checked products before buying. Today, online shopping has become very common, which has also increased the chances of fraud and cheating.He advised consumers not to lose confidence if they face cheating while buying goods online. Instead, they should file complaints with the consumer forum. Complaints can now be filed at the district level and also through online platforms.

District Bar Association President H.S. Maheshwarappa said consumers must always demand a proper bill when purchasing any item, whether it is gold, clothes, or vehicles. The bill becomes important proof if the product turns out to be defective or breaks during the warranty period.District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Chairperson B.H. Yashoda said every person is a consumer in one way or another throughout life. Therefore, people must know their rights and responsibilities.

Government Arts College Principal Dr. J. Kariappa encouraged students to learn about consumer rights along with their regular studies and help spread awareness in society.

Officials said consumers can file complaints within two years if they face problems such as defective goods, misleading advertisements, or being charged more than the fixed price.

Lok Adalat helps thousands settle cases quickly

VIJAYAPURA

The Rashtriya Lok Adalat held in the district ended successfully, helping thousands of people settle their legal disputes quickly through mutual understanding. Judges and legal officials urged the public to make better use of this system to save both time and money.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Harish A., who is also the Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority, spoke during the program and encouraged people to resolve their disputes through the Janata Adalat. He said many people spend years visiting courts, which often causes stress and financial burden.

He explained that Lok Adalat offers a friendly platform where both sides can sit together and settle matters peacefully with the help of judges and lawyers. This process helps people avoid long court battles and promotes harmony in society.

According to officials, a total of 13,624 cases pending in different courts across the district were settled during the Lok Adalat through mutual agreement. These included property division disputes, cheque bounce cases, motor vehicle accident compensation claims, and cases related to maintenance.District Legal Services Authority Member Secretary and Senior Civil Judge Arvind Hagargi also addressed the gathering. He advised citizens to choose settlement through conciliation so that justice can be delivered quickly and relationships in society remain peaceful.

The event also helped bring families together. Around eight couples from Vijayapura city and nearby taluks agreed to continue their married life after counseling and mutual discussion during the session.

Officials said that out of 1,009 land acquisition cases taken up during the Lok Adalat, 386 cases were successfully settled. Compensation worth more than ₹42 crore was resolved through mutual agreement.

Judge Harish A. appreciated lawyers, clients, police officers, and staff for their efforts in making the Lok Adalat successful.

District has adequate LPG stock, officials assure

CHITRADURGA

Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh has assured residents that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders meant for domestic use in the district. He urged people not to panic or make unnecessary bookings out of fear, which could create an artificial shortage.

The Deputy Commissioner spoke after holding a review meeting with officials of the Food Department and representatives of LPG supply companies at the Deputy Commissioner's office on Monday.

He explained that the state government has taken steps to ensure smooth LPG supply despite disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict in Middle East countries. Officials from oil companies have confirmed that there is sufficient stock available in the district.

According to official data, the district has a total of 4,14,512 LPG consumers. Among them, 1,02,358 customers are served by Indian Oil Corporation, 2,69,789 by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and 42,365 by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited.

The Deputy Commissioner also clarified the booking rules for LPG cylinders. After receiving a cylinder, consumers in urban areas must wait twenty five days before booking another cylinder. In rural areas, the waiting period is forty five days.He advised consumers to book cylinders only through approved online methods such as missed call service, company mobile applications, WhatsApp, or IVRS using their registered mobile number.

Man killed trying to stop couple's fight

CHITRADURGA

A tragic incident occurred at Buddha Circle in Chitradurga when a man lost his life while trying to intervene in a couple's argument. Sadiqullah was reportedly fighting with his wife on Stadium Road when Tajpir, 42, stepped in to calm the situation.

In a shocking turn, Sadiqullah attacked Tajpir with a machete, seriously injuring him. Tajpir was rushed to Davangere Hospital, but unfortunately, he succumbed to his injuries.

A video of the confrontation quickly went viral, leaving the local community in shock.

Deputy secretary urges quick completion of works

VIJAYAPURA

Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary Prakash Vaddara has directed officials to complete ongoing development works on priority across several villages in the district.

During a field visit on Sunday, Vaddara inspected road and bridge works in parts of Tikota, Babaleshwar and Vijayapura taluks. The visit aimed to review the progress of ongoing projects and ensure that they are completed according to rules and within the scheduled time.

He first visited Harnal village in Tikota taluk, where he inspected the recently completed silt removal work carried out in the Doni river. Officials explained the work done to improve water flow and reduce flooding during the rainy season.

Later, Vaddara travelled to Babaleshwar taluk and reviewed the silt removal work near bridges located within the limits of Saravada and Honaganahalli villages. He also inspected similar works near Itinahalli village in Vijayapura taluk.

Speaking to officials during the inspection, he said that the desilting work is still in the progress stage and must be completed on priority while strictly following government guidelines. He also instructed the concerned engineers to immediately complete the survey work related to the bridge construction at Itinahalli village.

Executive Engineer of the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department Sanjay Kotennavar, Panchayat Raj Engineering Department Executive Engineer Vidyadhar Nyamgonda, ' Assistant Executive Engineer Ravi Pawar, along with taluk and gram panchayat level officers and staff, were present.

HEALTHY CHILDREN FOUNDATION

Vaccination awareness program held at health center

CHITRADURGA

An awareness program on the importance of vaccination was held at the Kasavarahatti Primary Health Center in Chitradurga taluk on the occasion of National Immunization Day. Health officials stressed that protecting children's health is important for building a strong nation.

Speaking at the program, Administrative Medical Officer Dr. B. Shivakumar said that healthy children are the foundation of a healthy country. He explained that the government provides free vaccines to children under one year of age to protect them from twelve dangerous diseases.

He also said that free HPV vaccination is being provided to fourteen year old girls across the country to prevent cervical cancer. Eligible girls and parents were encouraged to take advantage of the vaccination program.

Taluk Health Education Officer B. Moogappa said National Immunization Day is observed every year on March 16 to spread awareness about the importance of vaccines. He explained that widespread vaccination has helped the world eliminate smallpox and has greatly reduced diseases such as polio, measles, and tetanus.He added that oral polio vaccination has been provided in India since 1995, and the disease was successfully eradicated in the country through the efforts of the health department with support from the public.Health Inspector Praveen Kumar also spoke and reminded people that vaccination played an important role in protecting communities during the Covid pandemic.

ASHA mentor Tabitha advised pregnant women to register with ASHA workers or health officials as soon as they learn about their pregnancy. She said mothers should receive proper vaccinations, medical care, and nutritious food to protect both mother and child.

QUICK READ

Raichur police arrest man selling adulterated Shendi

Raichur

West Police Station authorities have arrested a man for selling adulterated shendi to the public and seized 63 liters of the contaminated product. Acting on a tip-off, police raided a spot near the railway station park on March 13 at 4.30 pm. The shendi was found mixed with CH powder, posing a risk to buyers. Along with the shendi, Rs. 1,890 worth of the product and Rs. 150 cash from sales were confiscated. A case has been registered at West Police Station, and the accused has been remanded to judicial custody for further investigation.

Power line upgrade may affect multiple villages

Chikkaballapur

Karnataka Electricity Transmission Corporation Limited will electrify a 30.408 km transmission line on March 17, upgrading it from a 220KV single-phase line to a two-phase line with A.A.A.C. conductors. The line runs through villages in Madhugiri taluk, Tumkur district, and Gouribidanur taluk, Chikkaballapur district, including Palyadahalli, Raghuvanahalli, Gondihalli, Kasaba Hobli, Udumalodu, and Anudi. Residents are warned not to climb towers, throw objects, or tie cattle to them during or after the work. The corporation will not be responsible for accidents caused by such acts, the Madhugiri BESCOM Executive Engineer stated.

Villagers felicitate MLA during community hall foundation

Dr. Beldale said the new community hall near Sri Beeralingeshwara Temple will host events, strengthen unity, and aid village development

BIDAR

Villagers of Kolara (K) in Bidar South constituency honored their MLA Dr. Shailendra Beldale by gifting him a lamb and felicitating him with a traditional shawl during a ceremony held for the construction of a new community hall.

The MLA performed the foundation ritual near the Sri Beeralingeshwara Temple in the village. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Beldale said the villagers had long felt the need for a suitable place to conduct social, religious and public programs. Understanding this need, steps have now been taken to build a community hall for the benefit of the people.

He said the new hall will help villagers organize meetings, religious events, social functions and other community activities. According to him, such facilities strengthen unity among residents and encourage cooperation in village development.

Dr. Beldale added that the construction of the hall is another important step towards improving basic infrastructure in the village. He said he has instructed the concerned officers and contractors to complete the work quickly while maintaining good quality.

The MLA also prayed to Lord Beeralingeshwara that the new community hall would bring progress and benefit everyone in the village.

Speaking further, Dr. Beldale said special attention is being given to the development of villages across the Bidar South constituency. He explained that along with roads, drinking water, electricity, health services and education, the construction of community halls is also being prioritized.

He said such halls serve as a common platform for public meetings and social gatherings, helping strengthen unity and overall development in rural areas.

Local leaders and villagers attended the ceremony and expressed happiness over the new facility that will soon serve the entire community.

Congress slams Central Government over LPG hike

Puttaraju criticized the Centre's revenue focus, citing LPG shortages, labor injustice, and ineffective political measures harming common people

RAMANAGARA

The District Congress Labour Unit has strongly condemned the recent rise in cooking gas prices and the ongoing disruption in LPG supply, blaming the Central Government for negligence. Speaking to reporters, District Congress Labour Unit President Puttaraju said that the price hike and supply issues are affecting over seven crore people in Karnataka, including households, hoteliers, and street vendors.

Puttaraju criticized the Centre for prioritizing revenue over public welfare and accused it of ignoring pro-people measures. "Even after paying higher prices, many families are unable to get cylinders. Hoteliers are forced to shut down due to supply disruptions," he said. He added that wage laborers are also facing injustice due to the government's policies, and petty political moves such as renaming the NREGA scheme are not helping the common people.

He warned that the state's Deputy Chief Minister and Congress leaders, including State Congress Committee President D.K. Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, would organize widespread protests across Karnataka to oppose the central government's LPG pricing policy.

Several party leaders attended the press conference, including Channapatna Congress Labour Unit Taluk President Rajmahender, State Joint Secretary Shakeel, District Vice President Syed Arif Ullah, District Secretary Vinay, Ramanagara Town President Jayalakshmamma, Harohalli Hobli President Ashwath, Bidadi-Kootagal Hobli President Siddharaju, Ramanagara Taluk President Devaraju, and Channapatna City Secretary M.C. Swamy. They called on citizens to stand against the price hike and supply disruptions affecting daily life.

HPV vaccine essential to prevent cervical cancer: Badole

BIDAR

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is essential for preventing cervical cancer among girls aged between 14 and 15 years, said Dr. Girish Badole, Chief Executive Officer of the Bidar Zilla Panchayat. He was speaking after inaugurating the HPV vaccination drive held on Monday at the Mother and Child Care Centre of the 100-bed hospital. The programme was jointly organized by the Bidar District Administration, Bidar Zilla Panchayat and the District Health and Family Welfare Department.

Dr. Badole said that just as the health department successfully eradicated Polio through vaccination, the HPV vaccine will help prevent cervical cancer in girls. He urged parents and guardians to take responsibility and ensure that their daughters receive the vaccine. He also emphasized that the cooperation of the health and education departments is crucial for the success of the programme.

He directed officials of the education department to ensure that girls aged between 14 and 15 studying in schools are sent to nearby health institutions for vaccination.

District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr. Dhyaneshwar Neeragude said that, as per departmental guidelines, the vaccine will initially be administered only at health institutions in the first phase.

Paediatrician Dr. Varsha explained that HPV is a virus responsible for cervical cancer.

According to guidelines, girls aged between 14 and 15 should take the vaccine after having food. District RCH Officer Dr. Shivashankar B. stated that the HPV vaccine is safe and effective in preventing cervical cancer among adolescent girls. He added that after receiving the vaccine, beneficiaries can obtain a certificate through the U-WIN Portal.Among those present were Dr. Dileep Dongre, Dr. Kiran Patil, Dr. Shantaling Patil, Umesh Biradar, Shivashankar Bemalgi, Gurunath Kavale, Omkar, Lokesh, Shanta, Ajay Patil, Ravindra, Abraham, Anita, Avinash (HIO), ASHA workers, and officials and staff of the health department.

Free training opportunities open for rural youth

VIJAYAPURA

Canara Bank Deshpande RSET Training Institute has invited applications for a 30-day free training in refrigeration and air conditioning for unemployed rural youth and women aged 18 to 50. The training, starting in April, will provide free food and accommodation. Participants will learn technical skills, entrepreneurship, market surveys, sales techniques, government schemes, bank loan procedures, soft skills, yoga, and business project preparation. Priority will be given to early applicants from rural areas. Interested candidates can register by March 30 by contacting the institute in Haliyal at 8217236973, 9483485489, or 9482188780.

Responsible Use of Gruha Lakshmi Funds Is Everyone's Duty: K. Raju

RAMANAGARA

District President of the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee K. Raju has stressed that the proper utilisation of funds under the Gruha Lakshmi scheme is the responsibility of everyone. The state government spends thousands of crores annually on the ambitious programme, which provides ₹2,000 every month directly to the bank accounts of poor and middle-class women to support their financial needs.

Speaking at a workshop for Anganwadi workers held at the District Panchayat hall on Monday, organised jointly by the District Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee and the Department of Women and Child Welfare, Raju highlighted issues related to the misuse of the scheme.

He said it has been 27 months since the scheme was implemented, but around 1.44 lakh beneficiaries across the state have passed away during this period. Due to lack of updated information, funds have continued to be credited to some of these accounts. In several cases, family members have withdrawn money using ATM cards, leading to the misuse of nearly ₹69 crore.

Raju urged Anganwadi workers to play an important role in preventing such irregularities. They should promptly inform the department if any beneficiary in their jurisdiction passes away so that officials can stop further payments through the Seva Sindhu system.

He added that ₹1,427 crore has been credited so far to 2.81 lakh beneficiaries in the district under the scheme.

Sanjeevini Ugadi fair promotes women self help groups

CHIKKABALLAPURA

Deputy Commissioner G. Prabhu inaugurated the "Sanjeevini Ugadi Monthly Fair and Exhibition" organized by the district administration and Zilla Panchayat at the District Administration building premises on Monday. He appealed to the public to support women self help groups by purchasing festival groceries prepared by them for the Ugadi celebrations.

The fair has been organized under the National Rural Livelihood Mission scheme to strengthen women's self help groups and encourage self employment in rural areas. A special Ugadi grocery kit prepared by women members is being sold at the fair at a discounted price.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy Commissioner said such initiatives help empower rural women and provide them opportunities to earn through their products. He urged citizens of the district to encourage the women by buying the Ugadi kits prepared by them.

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Dr. Y. Naveen Bhat said Ugadi and Ramzan are major festivals celebrated across the country. To support women's groups during the festive season, the district has introduced the special "Ugadi Akka Dinasi Mini Kit" for customers.

More than 250 women from 24 self help groups across the district have worked together to prepare the kit. The package includes locally produced items such as organic jaggery, toor dal, coconut, gram oil, maida flour, ghee, homemade papad and other ingredients used for festival cooking.

The kit is being sold for ₹499, which is lower than the market price of ₹670. Officials said the products are purchased directly from farmers and manufacturers without middlemen, ensuring good quality at affordable rates.

MANDYA DC CALLS FOR FLAWLESS DIGITAL CENSUS 2027

MANDYA

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kumar has directed technical staff and officials to carry out the 2027 Census smoothly and accurately, as it will be conducted entirely in digital format for the first time. He emphasized the importance of precision and transparency during a training session for technical staff at the District Collector's office.

Unlike the 2011 Census, which was carried out manually, the 2027 Census will use a mobile application for data collection. Dr. Kumar highlighted that this approach will improve the accuracy of information and help the government deliver services more efficiently to citizens.

He instructed the staff to focus on digital data entry, proper use of the mobile app, and preparation of House List Block (HLB) maps. He also stressed the need for live monitoring and effective management of census data through the "Census Management and Monitoring System" (CMMS) portal to ensure that every household is accurately counted.

The training session was attended by Smt. Dhanya, Assistant Director of the Directorate of Census, Mr. Kesavamurthy, District Statistical Officer, and Mr. Chetan S, Assistant Director at the District Collector's office. Officials were briefed on their responsibilities and the technical procedures required for the smooth execution of the census, emphasizing teamwork and vigilance to make the digital census a success.

Dr. Kumar concluded by urging all technical staff to maintain high standards of accuracy and efficiency in the upcoming nationwide exercise.

IN THE COURT OF THE HON'BLE ADDITIONAL SUBORDINATE JUDGE, HOSUR
O.S. NO - 142/2022

V. Mohanbabu and 6 others
...plaintiff
Vs
S. Vijayaragavalu and 3 others
..Defendant

NOTICE

Defendant No-1:
S. Vijayaragavalu, s/o Sundarrajan, Hindu, aged about 59yrs, residing at D.no-79, 5th block, SSi area, Rajaji nagar, Bangalore.
Defendant No-3:
G. Ramesh s/o Govindarav, Hindu, aged about 55yrs, residing at D.no-4362, Subramaniya nagar, A block 3rd cross, Rajaji nagar, Bangalore.
Take notice that the above plaintiffs have filed the above case for injunction, declaration of rights, cancellation of sale deed and other reliefs and the same is posted on 30.03.2026 for your appearance before the court either in person or by pleader at 10.00 a.m, and state your side of statement if any, failing which the court will be passing an exparte order.
/By order of the court/
Advocate for Plaintiff
V. SANKAR, M.A., M.L.,

J. BHAGYALAKSHMI, M.Com., LL.B.,
ADVOCATE
Enr No:- MS. 817/2014
HOSUR-635 109
Ph. No:- 97105 47448

PUBLIC NOTICE

That my client Smt. Latha W/o Raghu, Resident of Madavanagara (Nandini Layout), Sira Town, Tumakuru District. Smt. Latha client was also in custody of original Registered Rectification deed dt: 19.06.2018 Reg as No. SRA-1-01554/2018-19. Unfortunately my client has lost this original Registered Rectification deed dt: 19.06.2018, at old Talluk office, Sira dt. 06.03.2026.
In this regard my client Smt. Latha has lodged online complaint to police, vide LOSS of Articles No. 2108317/2026, dt. 13.03.2026.
That if anybody finds original Rectification deed dt: 19.06.2018, hence anybody having title interest and right in any manner over the schedule property, may intimate the same in writing with documentary evidence to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of this publication, failing which my client will proceed with the loan transactions as not claimed.
Further it is requested that if anybody finds above said registered Rectification deed dt: 19.06.2018, the same may be handed over either to me or to my client.
SCHEDULE:
Property bearing municipal Assessment No. 6562 / Sy No. 32/5, Site No. 21, E-khatha No. 32-588-2364, East-West = 9.00 meter, North-South = 13.00 meter, situated at Madavanagara (Nandini Badavane), Sira Town, Tumkur Dist.
H. Wajid Ahmed
Advocate and Notary
R.T. Road, Sira Town
Mob: 9448101786

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I, EJAS BANU W/o late SYED SAFDAR PASHA, R/o No 65, Ground Floor, 3rd Cross, Manjunatha Layout, Arkere Mico Layout, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore South, Bengaluru, Karnataka- 560076, declare that the name of mine has been wrongly written as AJAZ BANU in my husband PPO No-7009/ LPS/ BG. The actual name of mine is EJAS BANU, which may be amended accordingly.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MADHU V alias VENKATRAMANA MADHU S/o VENKATARAMANA NARAYANA BHAGWAT, R/o 11/1, 2nd Main, 4th Cross, Vinayakanagar, Adugodi, Bangalore South, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560030, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MADHU BHAGWAT.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ABDUS SUDIAS**, S/o Inayath, resident of No 10 Modi Road K G F Building Sonnappa Garden DJ Halli Po: Arabic College, Bengaluru - 560045, have changed my name to **ABDUS SUDAIS**, Vide Affidavit Dated: 06.03.2026 before notary C.V. EARAPPA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ASHRAF** , W/o, Chand Basha, Resident of New No 342 Vijayanagar Bengaluru Dist, 560066, have changed my name to **ASHRAF BEGUM**, vide affidavit dated: 16.03.2026 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MANJUNATH PUTTASWAMY** , S/o, Puttaswamy, Resident of No 101,11th Cross Gangondanahalli Bengaluru Dist, 560039, have changed my name to **MANJUNATHA PUTTASWAMY** , vide affidavit dated: 16.03.2026 before notary B.A. LAKSHMINARAYANA RAO, Bengaluru.

IN THE COURT OF SUBORDINATE JUDGE AT TIRUVOTTIYUR
C.O.S. No.133 of 2025

M/s. R SONS TIMBERS,
Rep by his Proprietor
Mr. RATHOD JAYKUMAR HIMATLAL
...Plaintiff
-Vs-
M/s. SHIV TIMBERS Rep by its Partner
Mr. AMRAT BHAI PATEL
...Defendant
NOTICE
M/s. SHIV TIMBERS Rep by its Partner Mr. AMRAT BHAI PATEL No. No 4, Kanteerava Studio Main Road, Parimala Nagar, Nandini Layout, Bengaluru Urban, Karnataka - 560 096
Sir/Madam,
Please take notice that on 02.03.2026, the Hon'ble Suboridinate Judge at Tiruvottiyur was pleased to order notice to you, returnable by 07.04.2026 and you are hereby required to appear before the above said Hon'ble Court at 10.30 A.M. on **07.04.2026** in person or through your counsel failing which the above suit will be decided in your absence without further notice to you.
A.SATHISH (1217/2020)
ADVOCATE
Counsel for Plaintiff

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that, my client, Mr. Ravi Shankar, S/o Lakshminarayana Bhat, aged about 60 years, residing at No.150 E,1st Floor 2nd Cross BEML Layout Basaveshwaranagar Bengaluru-560079, has LOST THE ORIGINAL REGISTERED SALE DEED DATED 23-04-2012, REGISTERED AS DOCUMENT No. RJN-1-00367-2012-13 of BOOK-1, STORED IN CD No. RJND213, IN THE OFFICE OF THE SENIOR SUB-REGISTRAR, RAJAJINAGAR, BENGALURU, LOST AT NEAR RAJAJINAGAR BUS STOP ON 08-11-2022, BETWEEN 12:00 PM TO 1:30 PM. A COMPLAINT IS LODGED IN ONLINE DATED 08-11-2022 VIDE LOST REPORT BEARING No. 0378839/2022, Finders may return the same to the nearest Police Station or contact at the below address. if any Persons, Firm, Company, Financial Institution or Organization has any claim are holding the afore mentioned document, they may contact the below mentioned address in writing within 15 days from the date of this notice failing which it will be presumed that there are no claims.
Mr. BHASKAR M &
ASSOCIATES ADVOCATES &
LEGAL CONSULTANTS,
Office Address: # 782/11 Ground Floor 17th B Main Road 60th Cross Near Lakshman Rao Skin Clinic 5th Bhasyam Circle RAJAJINAGAR Bengaluru-560010.
Mobile No.: 9147666033

QUICK READ

NIA chargesheets six for threatening witnesses in Puducherry

New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against six accused for allegedly threatening witnesses in a bid to subvert the trial in the 2023 murder case of Puducherry BJP leader Senthil Kumaran, officials said on Monday. The accused have been identified as Nithyanantham alias Nithi, Siva Sankar, Vengatesh, Ezhumalai, Heram alias TR alias Karthi and Udhayakumar. They have been chargesheeted before the Puducherry Special Court under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the NIA Act. According to the probe agency, four of the accused Nithyanantham, Siva Sankar, Vengatesh and Ezhumalai had earlier also been chargesheeted for their role in the main terror offence related to the killing of the BJP leader.

Venugopal seeks revocation of suspension of 8 Oppn MP from LS

New Delhi

Lok Sabha MP and Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal on Monday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to revoke the suspension of eight Opposition MPs for the entire Budget Session of Parliament. At least some decision should be taken, said the Congress MP while raising the issue soon after Question Hour. On Friday, we had raised the same. Our eight members were suspended, and they are sitting outside, he said. Expressing concern over the action against the eight Opposition MPs, Venugopal said, This House has witnessed so many agitations, not just on one day.

Row erupts in Odisha Assembly as Brahmagiri MLA gets second ballot

Bhubaneswar

Amid polling for four Rajya Sabha seats, the opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday raised serious objections to the vote cast by Brahmagiri MLA Upasna Mohapatra, who was given a second ballot after allegedly making a mistake while voting. As per reports, a row began during polling when Mohapatra allegedly made an overwriting while marking her ballot paper due to the ink problem. Later, she sought a second ballot paper from polling officials, fearing rejection of her vote. Agents and leaders of the Biju Janata Dal and the Indian National Congress present there immediately objected, halting the voting process for several minutes.

'PNG homes must surrender LPG cylinders by March 18'

Officials state adequate PNG stocks are available and the move is part of managing fuel supply and prioritizing a shift to piped gas

GANDHINAGAR

The Gujarat government, on Monday, asked domestic and commercial LPG consumers, who also have piped natural gas (PNG) connections, to give up their LPG connections by March 18, as part of efforts to manage fuel supply and expand the use of PNG.

The directive was announced during a press conference held at the Gujarat Assembly complex in Gandhinagar following the presentation of the state's Budget estimates for 2026–27.

Gujarat Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department's Additional Chief Secretary, Mona Khandhar, said the state currently has adequate stocks of domestic LPG cylinders and that buffer stocks are continuing to increase.

Kerosene distribution arrangements are also being made in the state along with LPG, Khandhar said, adding that the state government is coordinating continuously with the Central government to ensure sufficient availability of fuel.

She said that adequate stock of PNG is available across the state for both domestic and commercial use and that the state government is prioritising the transition of LPG consumers to PNG where connections already exist.

According to Khandhar, consumers, who have both LPG and PNG connections, have been asked to give up their LPG connections by March 18 as part of the gas conversion process.

The state government has also initiated arrangements to distribute kerosene in rural areas as an additional option alongside LPG supply.

Khandhar said the Central government has allocated 1,452 kilolitres of kerosene, equivalent to 14,52,000 litres, to the state.

Of this, 36,000 litres have been allocated to each district. From this stock, five litres will be provided per family and 25 litres per institution. Necessary arrangements are being put in place, she added.

Officials also outlined sector-wise allocation of commercial LPG for essential and semi-essential services.

Hospitals and educational institutions will receive 100 per cent supply, while pharma companies, dairy industries, seed processing industries and airline and railway canteens will receive supply with a 70 per cent cap.

Snapshots

* PNG transition prioritized
* Kerosene distribution in rural areas
* Sector-wise LPG caps for services
* State monitoring gas agencies
* Buffer stocks of LPG increasing

Lakhs of indigenous families given land rights: Assam CM

GUWAHATI

In a post on the social media platform X, the Chief Minister said the state government has undertaken significant steps to ensure land ownership for indigenous communities and tea garden workers, while also reclaiming land from illegal encroachments.

Highlighting the progress achieved under Mission Basundhara, Sarma said more than 2.3 lakh families have become landowners through the initiative. The programme was launched to streamline land records, resolve land-related disputes and provide land rights to eligible beneficiaries across the state.

Staying true to our promise of protecting 'Jati, Mati, Bheti', our government has not only freed up lands from the clutches of encroachers but also given indigenous people land rights for the first time since Independence, Sarma said in his post.

The govt launched 'Mission Basundhara' to streamline land records, resolve land-related disputes and provide land rights to eligible beneficiaries across the state

The Chief Minister also stated that around 35 lakh tea garden families have been granted land pattas for tea estate line lands. The move aims to provide legal ownership and long-term security to tea garden workers who have been residing in these estates for generations without formal land titles. According to Sarma, the government's land reform measures are intended to address long-standing issues related to land ownership and documentation, while strengthening socio-economic security for communities that historically lacked legal rights over the land they occupy.

He reiterated the government's stance against illegal encroachments, stating that land in Assam must be preserved for its rightful residents. Assam's lands are for its people, not for encroachers, the Chief Minister said.

Mission Basundhara forms a key component of the state government's broader policy to strengthen land governance. Through this initiative, authorities are working to settle land rights claims, correct land records and distribute land pattas to eligible families, particularly among indigenous communities and tea garden workers.

2 killed in landslide at stone quarry in Bengal's Birbhum

KOLKATA

According to police officials, the stone quarry where the accident occurred is owned by Sirajul Islam, who also serves as the chairperson of a standing committee of the Birbhum Zilla Parishad.

Authorities said around 12 to 14 workers were present at the site when the landslide occurred while work was underway.

The sudden collapse of rock and debris trapped several labourers working in the quarry. Local residents rushed to the spot and began rescue efforts even before police and emergency teams arrived. Several workers were pulled out from the rubble during the initial rescue attempts.

Police later launched a formal rescue operation, and the injured workers were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. Officials confirmed that two workers died in the accident.

However, authorities fear that the death toll could rise as some workers are suspected to still be trapped beneath the debris.

The incident has revived concerns about safety conditions in stone quarries in the district. In September last year, a similar accident occurred at a quarry in Nalhati, where five workers lost their lives after a collapse.

Monday's tragedy has also triggered a political controversy in the state. Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanded strict action against the quarry owner, alleging that the quarry was operating illegally.

Dhruva Saha, former president of the BJP's Birbhum organisational district, alleged that the quarry was functioning in violation of regulations and called for immediate police action. He also pointed out that the Election Commission of India's Model Code of Conduct for the Assembly elections had already come into force.

That quarry is illegal. The Model Code of Conduct for the Assembly elections has already come into force. We demand that the police make an arrest immediately, Saha

SC declines to entertain journalist Ravi Nair's plea

NEW DELHI

A Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta briefly heard submissions from senior advocate Anand Grover, who appeared on behalf of Nair. The Bench asked the journalist to first approach the Gujarat High Court for appropriate relief instead of directly invoking the Supreme Court's jurisdiction.

Nair had approached the apex court under Article 32 of the Constitution of India, challenging a notice dated February 12, 2026, issued by the Ahmedabad Crime Branch directing him to appear before the agency for a preliminary enquiry.

The notice relates to an article published last year that was co-authored by Nair and journalist Pranshu Verma, who was serving as the New Delhi bureau chief of The Washington Post at the time.

According to the notice, Nair had been asked to appear in person before the Crime Branch in Ahmedabad on February 19 in connection with the enquiry concerning the article and a related social media post.

During the hearing, senior advocate Anand Grover argued that the Ahmedabad Crime Branch did not have the jurisdiction to issue such a notice in the matter. However, the Bench led by Justice Vikram Nath questioned why the petitioner had approached the Supreme Court directly without first seeking relief from the Gujarat High Court.

The court expressed its reluctance to entertain the petition at this stage and advised the journalist to approach the appropriate High Court.

When Grover requested interim protection from coercive action, stating that Nair was based in New Delhi and feared arrest if required to appear before the Gujarat authorities, the Bench maintained its stance that the matter should be taken up before the jurisdictional High Court.

BRS to corner Cong govt in T'gana Assembly over unkept promises

HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) will corner Congress government in Telangana legislature over unfulfilled poll promises, party's working president and former minister K.T. Rama Rao said on Monday.

On the first day of the budget session of state legislature, he along with the party legislators visited the Telangana Martyrs' Memorial (Gun Park) before attending the Assembly session.

BRS MLAs and MLCs paid tributes to the martyrs and staged a protest at the memorial, raising slogans against the Congress government.

During the protest, BRS leaders demanded the immediate implementation of the promises made by the Congress government, particularly the Six Guarantees. They also demanded that the government grant legal status to these guarantees and allocate adequate funds in the state budget for their implementation.

Speaking to the media later, KTR said that it has been a long-standing tradition for BRS legislators to pay respects to the martyrs whose sacrifices made the formation of Telangana possible before attending Assembly sessions.

KTR strongly criticised the Congress government in Telangana for what he described as a betrayal of farmers and the people of the state. He alleged that the Congress government has deceived every section of society by failing to fulfil the promises it made before coming to power.

The BRS leader said that the BRS will raise these issues forcefully during the ongoing Assembly budget session and expose what he called the Congress party's betrayal of Telangana. He particularly criticised the government's alleged plan to allocate ₹1000 crore to Rahul Gandhi while neglecting farmers in the state.

SC quashes criminal case against Ashoka varsity prof

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday quashed criminal proceedings against Ashoka University's political science professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, after the Haryana government informed the apex court that it had refused to grant sanction for his prosecution over social media posts related to 'Operation Sindoor'.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi recorded the submission of Additional Solicitor General(ASG) SV Raju, appearing for the Haryana government, that it had decided not to proceed with prosecution as a one-time gesture of magnanimity.

As a one-time magnanimity, the sanction is refused. The chapter is closed. He can be warned that this is not repeated again, ASG Raju submitted before the top court.

While disposing of the matter, the CJI–led Bench also issued a word of caution to the petitioner, observing that he should act prudently in the future.

Sometimes writing in a manner which can be read between the lines creates more problems. Sometimes the situation is sensitive, and we all have to be careful, the apex court observed.

It further said that it had no reason to doubt that Mahmudabad, being a highly learned professor, would act responsibly in the future.

The Supreme Court was hearing a petition filed by Mahmudabad seeking the quashing of the criminal proceedings initiated against him over two social media posts concerning Operation Sindoor, India's cross-border military response to Pakistan following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

In an earlier hearing, the CJI-led bench had impressed upon the Haryana government to reconsider the matter and close the criminal case by declining sanction for prosecution.

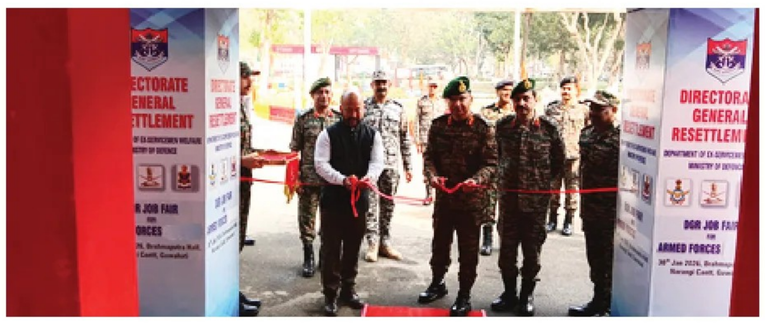
JOB WINDOWS OPEN

Exclusive job fair for ex-servicemen

CHANDIGARH

Officials said the job fair will serve as a dedicated platform to link ex-servicemen from the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force with corporate and industrial employers offering opportunities across diverse fields. These sectors include security services, information technology, administration, logistics, healthcare, engineering, hospitality and manufacturing.

According to a statement issued by the Indian Army Western Command, the event will allow former service personnel to explore job opportunities in logistics, manufacturing, security services, administration, hospitality and several technical domains.



The job fair in Chandigarh will be held at the Arjan Singh Auditorium starting at 7 a.m. Ex-servicemen attending the event have been advised to carry their identity cards along with five copies of their biodata to facilitate interactions with potential employers.

Officials added that the DGR has also highlighted several benefits for participating industry employers. These include free online registration, complimentary job postings, free allocation of stalls at the venue and access to resumes of ex-servicemen seeking employment.

In addition to the Chandigarh event, the DGR will organise another job fair for ex-servicemen in New Delhi on March 20. The Ministry of Defence said registrations for the Delhi event will begin at 7 a.m. at the Aravali Auditorium, located near the Delhi Metro's Shankar Vihar station. The initiative reflects the continued commitment of the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare to support the resettlement and welfare of retired armed forces personnel. Authorities noted that the discipline, leadership abilities and technical expertise developed during military service make ex-servicemen valuable assets in the civilian workforce.

Government of Karnataka
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEERING DIVISION KALABURAGI

No : EE/PRED/KLB/KKRDB /TS-2/2025-26/6685 Date : 13/03/2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through E-procurement Two Cover System)

1) Name of work: 1. Construction of Class Rooms to Primary and High Schools Various 5 Villages in Chittapur Consstituency Indent No. for Tender 2nd Call (1) 24713/Call-2 (2) 24719/Call-2 (3) 24685/Call-2 (4) 24732/Call-2 (5) 24680/Call-2, 2. Construction of C.C. Road and drain at Nizampur, Kamalnagar, Akkamahadevi colony, Oja layout, Kubernagar, Savitribai Phule nagar, Venkateswara nagar, Giri layout and Sharana nagar in Kalaburgi city of Kalaburagi south assembly constituency Indent No. 25102 **Total 6 Works**, 2) Head of account: **KKRDB for the year 2025-26 & 2026-27,** 3) Amount put to tender: **Minimum Rs. 55,34,948.33, Maximum Rs. 4,10,17,445.8,** 4) Class of Contractor: Class- II & Class-III and Above, 5) Issue of Blank Tender Documents: **13-03-2026 to 07-04-2026 upto 4.00 pm**, 6) Tender Form Fee : As per KPPP Norms, 7) E.M.D. Fee: Minimum Rs. 55,500.00, Maximum Rs. 6,15,500.00, 8) Receipt of completed tender documents: **13-03-2026 to 07-04-2026 upto 4.00 pm,** 9) Technical Bid Opening Date: **08-04-2026 After 4.00 pm**, 10) Financial Bid opening Date: **10-04-2026 After 11.00 am**, 11) For more details contact; Office of the Executive Engineer, Panchayat Raj Engineering Division Opp: Karnataka Grameen Bank (PKGB) Head office, Kusnoor Road, Rajapur Kalaburagi, 12) Website Address: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Panchayat Raj Engineering Division Kalaburagi

DIPR/Kalaburagi/1183/KSMC&A/2025-26

QUICK READ

Delhi CM shares plan to convert 3 major hospitals into AIIMS-style

New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday proposed integrating Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital into a single super medical hub modelled on the lines of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). In her tweet, CM Gupta said, GTB Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital are being integrated and developed into a super medical hub on the lines of AIIMS. This will increase bed availability, simplify the process of tests and referrals, and reduce waiting times so that every patient can receive timely, fast, and better treatment.

Seat-sharing in DMK alliance face strain as allies seek larger share

Chennai

Seat-sharing negotiations within the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) have entered a difficult phase, with several long-time allies pressing for a greater share of constituencies ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Leaders of the Left parties and smaller allies have conveyed their concerns to the DMK leadership, arguing that their electoral performance and grassroots presence warrant an increase in seats compared to what they contested in the 2021 Assembly polls. The discussions come at a time when the alliance has expanded, making the distribution of constituencies more complex.

Govt warns of deepfake video of ex-Army chief with misleading claims

The PIB fact check unit issued a warning about an AI-generated deepfake video of former Chief of Army Staff Manoj Pande being circulated online by Pakistani propaganda accounts

NEW DELHI

In a statement, the Press Information Bureau Fact Check unit clarified that the circulating video has been digitally manipulated and does not represent any genuine statement made by Gen. Manoj Pande (Retd.). According to the agency, certain Pakistani propaganda accounts have been sharing the altered clip on social media platforms with misleading claims intended to create confusion about the Indian Army.

The PIB Fact Check unit stated that the video is an AI-generated deepfake, a form of digitally altered media created using artificial intelligence to imitate a person's appearance, voice, or actions. The agency stressed that the retired Army chief has not made any such remarks and cautioned citizens against believing or sharing the content without verifying its authenticity.

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Big Breaking
Delhi: Former Chief of Army Staff, Gen Manoj Pande (Retd.) says, "You know the biggest loss of supporting Israel? Our Indian army had always been trained to be a ethical force, the current situation is causing it to become an ethnic force. Mark my words, this situation is going towards a complete mutiny. We have all seen what is happening in Assam."
संवाद
TION BUILDING & LEADERSHIP.
A SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE
DIGITALLY ALTERED

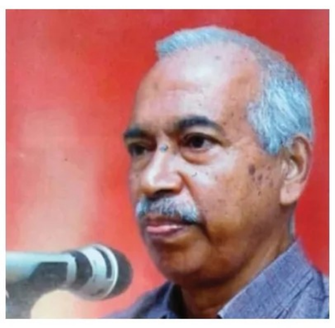
Officials said the manipulated clip appears to show the former Army chief making controversial comments about the functioning and conduct of the Indian Army. In the video, he is falsely portrayed as claiming that India's support for Israel has caused losses to the Indian Army and that soldiers are being forced to become an ethnic force. The clip also misleadingly suggests that Israeli instructors are training Indian Army personnel to dehumanise certain communities and warns of a possible revolt within the armed forces.

The PIB described the circulation of such videos as part of a coordinated disinformation campaign aimed at misleading the public and undermining trust in the Indian Armed Forces. Authorities emphasised that these tactics are often used to spread false narratives and create mistrust through fabricated content.

The fact-checking unit urged citizens and social media users to remain vigilant and rely only on verified information from official government sources. It also advised people not to share unverified videos or posts online, as doing so can unintentionally amplify misinformation and propaganda.

Expelled CPI-M leader Kunhikrishnan enters Payyannur fray

KANNUR



A dramatic political contest is unfolding in the northern Kerala constituency of Payyannur after expelled veteran Left leader V Kunhikrishnan announced on Monday that he will contest the upcoming Assembly elections as an independent candidate

Kunhikrishnan, once a widely popular grassroots leader of the CPI(M) in Kannur district, had been embroiled in a prolonged confrontation with the party's local leadership over allegations of misappropriation of funds meant for a martyrs' memorial account.

The dispute had been simmering for several months before escalating when the veteran leader published a book outlining his version of events and accusing certain party leaders of manipulating the issue against him.

The controversy ultimately led to his expulsion from the CPI(M), bringing an end to his long-standing relationship with the party that has dominated politics in the region for decades. Following his expulsion, Kunhikrishnan declared that he would take his case directly to the people by contesting the election independently. I will meet every voter in the constituency and seek their support. During the course of my campaign, I will explain in detail why I was forced to take this step and why I have decided to contest, he said while announcing his candidature.

Kunhikrishnan will face the sitting CPI(M) legislator T. I. Madhusoodanan, whom he has openly accused of playing a key role in the alleged manipulation that led to his expulsion from the party.

The contest is significant because Payyannur has long been regarded as a stronghold of the Left in Kerala politics. Internal party dynamics in the constituency have often played a decisive role in determining electoral outcomes. The seat has historically remained with the CPI(M), reflecting the party's deep organisational roots in the region.

In the 2021 Kerala Legislative Assembly election, Madhusoodanan secured a decisive victory, winning the constituency by a margin of more than 49,000 votes. However, Kunhikrishnan's entry into the race as an Independent candidate has introduced a new element of uncertainty, raising the possibility of a split in the traditional Left vote bank.

Political observers believe the development could transform the Payyannur contest into one of the most closely watched battles in northern Kerala, as internal dissent within the Left camp may influence the electoral arithmetic in the constituency.

Voting for Rajya Sabha polls underway in Bihar Assembly

PATNA

Voting for five Rajya Sabha seats from Bihar was underway at the Assembly on Monday with leaders from both the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the opposition Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) arriving to cast their votes. The polling process began at 9 a.m. and will continue until 4 p.m., while counting of votes will start at 5 p.m., and the final results are expected to be declared shortly afterwards. Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav cast his vote and launched a sharp attack on Nitish Kumar and the Bharatiya Janata Party. He alleged that since Nitish Kumar left the INDIA bloc in 2024 and joined the NDA, the BJP has been plotting politically against him.

Murmu, Modi express grief over Cuttack hospital blaze

BHUBANESWAR

According to officials, the fire broke out in the ICU of the Trauma Care Centre at SCB Medical College, leading to the deaths of ten patients and injuries to several others. Authorities promptly shifted the affected patients to safer locations within the hospital, and treatment for the injured is continuing.

Expressing grief over the incident, President Droupadi Murmu conveyed her condolences to the bereaved families through a post on social media. Deeply distressed by the loss of lives in the tragic fire incident at a hospital in Cuttack, Odisha. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I wish a speedy recovery to those injured, she said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences and announced an ex-gratia payment of ₹2 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF). In addition, ₹50,000 will be provided to those injured in the incident.

The mishap at a hospital in Cuttack, Odisha, is deeply painful. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray for the speedy recovery of the injured, the Prime Minister said in a message posted by the Prime Minister's Office.

Several other leaders also expressed grief over the tragedy. Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati said he was deeply saddened by the incident and assured that affected patients had been quickly moved to safe locations while their treatment continued without interruption.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik also conveyed their condolences to the families of the victims.

Naveen Patnaik described the incident as deeply saddening and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls. He urged the state government to ensure the best possible medical care for those injured in the fire. Patnaik also said he had directed the Mayor of Cuttack and the MLA of Tangi-Choudwar to visit the site and provide necessary assistance to those affected.

Tripura announces 5% additional DA, DR for employees, pensioners

AGARTALA

The Tripura government on Monday announced a 5 per cent hike in Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) for 1,83,582 government employees and pensioners in the state.

Making the announcement on the second day of the ongoing Budget session of the Tripura Assembly, Chief Minister Manik Saha informed the House that the revised DA and DR would come into effect from April 1, 2026.

The announcement drew desk-thumping from members of the treasury bench. The Chief Minister made the announcement soon after Finance, Planning and Coordination Minister Pranajit Singha Roy presented the 2026–27 Budget in the Assembly.

To implement the additional DA and DR, the state government will incur an extra expenditure of about Rs 500 crore annually, Saha told the House.

Opposition members, including former minister Sudip Roy Barman of the Congress and Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury of the CPI-M, said the DA and DR hike should have been included in the Finance Minister's budget proposals.

The Chief Minister has violated established norms and convention, Roy Barman alleged, amid heated exchanges between treasury and opposition benches.

Jitendra Chaudhury, also a former minister and CPI-M Tripura state secretary, asked the Chief Minister to clarify the status of the pending DA and DR dues of state government employees and pensioners.

While Saha attempted to respond to the queries raised by the Leader of the Opposition, disruptions over other issues prevented him from completing his reply, prompting Acting Speaker Ram Prasad Paul to adjourn the House.

A Finance Department official said the decision would benefit more than 1,02,563 government employees and 81,019 pensioners. The official noted that after coming to power in March 2018, the BJP-led government revised pay scales with effect from October 1, 2018, based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Since then, the state government has announced additional DA and DR hikes on several occasions for employees and pensioners. State government employees and pensioners have long demanded parity in DA and DR with their counterparts in the Central government.

ECI seeks detailed report on cops transferred after Feb 28

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) had sought a detailed report from the West Bengal government on the police officers whose transfer orders were announced after February 28, which was the date of the publication of the final voters' list, minus those cases which were referred for the ongoing judicial adjudication after being classified under the logical discrepancy category.

In the letter from the Additional Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO) to the Additional Director General of Police (legal) & state police nodal officer for the polls, the Commission also sought a report on police officers who have been employed after superannuation.

In another communique to the state government, the ECI had also sought the details of those police officers under whose jurisdiction incidents of poll–related violence occurred both in the 2021 state Assembly elections and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

In continuation to the earlier Memo as noted above along with the reply referred to above, I am directed to request you to provide another list of police station level officers under whose jurisdiction incidences of pre-poll, as well as poll-day violence in 2021 Assembly Election and pre-poll, poll day as well as post-poll violence in 2024-Lok Sabha Election took place, read the second communique.

In fact, information about the police officials tainted by either involvement or remaining inactive during poll-related violence both in 2021 and 2024 was passed by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Gyanesh Kumar, while he announced the two-phase polling in West Bengal on April 23 and April 29. He also said that the Commission will take necessary action in the matter. In the first phase of elections on April 23, there will be polling for 152 Assembly constituencies, and in the second phase on April 29, there will be polling for 142 Assembly constituencies. The last few Assembly elections in West Bengal were held in seven to eight phases.

ED conducts raids in 'illegal' call centre case in Bengal

KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted raids at around 10 locations across West Bengal as part of its probe into the operations of an alleged illegal call centre, an official of the central agency said.

According to the official, the searches were conducted at about 10 premises in Siliguri, Howrah, Bidhannagar and Durgapur. The investigation is focused on the activities of an illegal call centre. However, it was not clear whether the investigation is linked to any political funding or the electoral process in the poll-bound state.

As per information, individuals identified as Surashree Kar, Samrat Ghosh and Subhajit Chakraborty, among others, are being searched. According to the official, a number of people are alleged to have been cheated through the illegal call centres, which are under the scanner of the central investigation agency.

During the search operations, ED sleuths examined digital devices, financial records and other related documents to trace the funds generated through the suspected call centre scam. The agency is also trying to identify persons running the operation and the channels used to transfer the proceeds of crime.

The development came a day after the Election Commission announced the Assembly polls in West Bengal.

TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS

Attorney General calls for national protocol on plea bargaining

NEW DELHI

R. Venkataramani, Attorney General for India, has called for a new framework for plea bargaining based on social, cultural, economic theories and practices at the inaugural session of the seminar on Delivering Justice in Time: Global Practices and Indian Experiences, jointly organised by O.P. Jindal Global University and the National Law University Delhi.

Plea bargaining is becoming universal. There's a new need for a national protocol for plea bargaining, a national protocol that can be evolved and which can, in a very healthy way, advise, guide, and counsel practitioners as well as victims of justice, so that the protocol can work more transparently and objectively. The legal and civil authorities should be prepared to play important roles. The Chief Justice of India has consented to have a strong internal discussion on it. Existing legal mechanisms will also be made ready to look through a new lens, and there is a concession for the defense and the resource management for the state. The resource management for the state is not only relevant for the plea bargaining aspect. It is a resource value for the state, essentially, like an economic principle that should run through the entire administration of justice. This is why I have been thinking about a National Institute for Criminal Justice Administration, which will also have an everyday index where we watch the measurement and performance. Those who practice in the trial court will find out how painful it is for people to simply waste their resources for governments, institutions, people, lawyers, and judges, as well as time! Venkataramani said.

A Legal Health Index is important for our country. The Legal Health Index will probably identify factors that will include preventative and predictable procedures, the ease of justice, what roles each one of us can play, and what kind of resource investment we require.

QUICK READ

Japan stresses peace amid Hormuz tensions

Tokyo

Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi spoke with U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, emphasizing the need to keep the Strait of Hormuz safe and stable. Hegseth assured Japan that U.S. forces in the country will remain unchanged and highlighted efforts to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance. While Japan, Australia, and other nations are cautious about sending warships, Koizumi confirmed Tokyo will maintain close communication with allies. The global oil route remains at risk due to the Iran conflict. Leaders worldwide, including in South Korea, Britain, and Canada, are reviewing options, but no new military commitments have been made yet.

Eleven Indians charged over fake US robberies

Boston

Eleven Indian nationals were charged in the U.S. for allegedly staging fake armed robberies to help people get illegal U visas. Prosecutors said the scheme, starting in March 2023, involved threats at convenience stores, liquor shops, and fast-food outlets. Victims were paid to appear in reports of the robberies, while organizers coordinated the fake crimes. Some participants even paid to include relatives. Six of the accused were arrested in Massachusetts, with others in Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio, all headed to Boston for court. Convictions could bring up to five years in prison and fines of $250,000.

Israel launches targeted ground operations Lebanon

Tel Aviv

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) began limited ground operations in southern Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah positions, officials said. The move aims to strengthen Israel's northern defenses and dismantle terrorist infrastructure. Prior to the ground deployment, artillery and airstrikes hit key targets to prepare the area. IDF units, including the 91st and 146th Divisions, are focused on protecting Galilee settlements while minimizing civilian harm. Night-vision footage showed soldiers inspecting buildings and moving through dense terrain. Israel blamed Hezbollah, supported by Iran, for escalating the conflict. The operations mark a significant increase in regional tension as Israel seeks to secure its border.

Global oil shock: Japan taps massive oil reserves

Japan begins unprecedented oil release from emergency reserves to stabilize economy amid Middle East conflict and blocked shipping routes.

TOKYO

Japan has officially begun the largest oil release in its history to protect its economy from the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

The government opened up its private emergency stocks, releasing fifteen days' worth of fuel to ensure gas stations and factories remain powered. This bold move comes as the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz blocks nearly all traditional shipping routes used to bring oil into the country.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi announced that this is only the first step. By the end of March, the government will release another full month of supply from its own national stockpiles. Japan is exceptionally well-prepared for this crisis, between private, government, and joint reserves, the nation holds enough oil to last for 254 days. This massive safety net allows the country to function for over eight months even if not a single new drop of oil arrives by sea.

This action is part of a global rescue plan led by the International Energy Agency, which is injecting over 400 million barrels into the world market to stop prices from spiraling. While Japan is flooding the market with oil, it is staying out of the military conflict. Despite pressure from the US to send warships to the region, Tokyo has declined, citing legal limits. Instead, Japan's leaders are focusing on "peace through strength" by securing their own energy and working closely with allies to find a diplomatic way to reopen the seas.

Total capacity

Japan possesses one of the world's largest emergency oil reserves, with enough supply for roughly 254 days, combining both private and state reserves.

China urges stability amid rising sea tensions

BEIJING

China has issued a strong call for peace in the Strait of Hormuz as global tensions threaten one of the world's most vital trade routes.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry urged all nations involved to stop military actions immediately and prevent the situation from spiraling out of control. This appeal comes at a critical time, as reports suggest the United States is planning to form a multinational naval coalition to escort merchant ships through these dangerous waters.

Spokesperson Lin Jian described the narrow waterway as a "vital artery" for global energy and trade. Because so much of the world's oil and gas passes through this single point between Iran and Oman, any disruption could send shockwaves through the global economy. China, which relies heavily on energy imports from the region, believes that keeping the shipping lanes open and safe is a shared responsibility for every country.

The Trump administration has reportedly reached out to several major nations, including China, to help police the area. While the U.S. looks to build a protective fleet, Beijing is focusing on a diplomatic approach. Chinese officials are emphasizing that the primary goal should be to "cool down" the conflict through dialogue rather than increasing military presence. They warned that further escalation could lead to regional turmoil that would hurt businesses and consumers worldwide. As the international community watches closely, China remains in contact with all sides, hoping to find a peaceful way to ensure that global trade can continue without interruption or fear.

The Israeli Air Force struck Iran overnight, destroying a key aircraft and hitting over 200 strategic sites, aiming to disrupt leadership mobility and regional military coordination.

Israel destroys top Iranian leadership logistics plane

TEL AVIV

The Israeli Air Force launched a high-stakes mission overnight, destroying a primary aircraft used by Iran's top leadership at Mehrabad International Airport.

The targeted plane was a vital asset for the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other high-ranking officials. Military experts describe its destruction as a significant blow to Tehran's ability to coordinate with regional allies and manage sensitive diplomatic missions.

According to official military statements, the aircraft served as a mobile command center and a logistics tool for military procurement. By removing this strategic asset, Israel aims to disrupt the synergy between Iran's central government and its various regional partners. Officials noted that losing this specific plane hinders the regime's mobility and its capacity to rebuild military strength during the current conflict.

This strike was part of a massive, ongoing aerial operation. Over the last twenty-four hours, Israeli jets hit more than 200 locations across western and central Iran. The targets included sophisticated missile batteries, air defense systems, and secret production sites for combat gear. Israel utilized its advanced F-35I Adir stealth fighters to bypass defenses and reach deep into Iranian territory.

The latest wave of strikes highlights a systematic effort to degrade Iran's ballistic missile network. Analysts believe the precision of these attacks signals a new phase in the conflict, focusing on the infrastructure that keeps the Iranian leadership connected to its international interests. As the mission continues, Israel remains committed to limiting the regime's operational flexibility and protecting its own borders from long-range threats.

US issues new travel advice for Gulf

DUBAI

The United States government has issued an updated travel advisory for its citizens currently living in or visiting the Gulf region. While commercial flights remain available from major hubs like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, officials warned that sudden cancellations are increasingly likely. This alert follows a period of heightened regional tension involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, which has directly impacted the safety of international air travel and local security.

According to the advisory, land borders between the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman currently remain open. However, travelers are urged to prepare for last-minute schedule changes. In Saudi Arabia, airports in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam are still operational, but frequent missile and drone threats have led to strict air traffic restrictions. In a significant move, U.S. government employees stationed in Saudi Arabia have already been directed to shelter in place until further notice.

The warning comes shortly after a brief suspension of flights at Dubai International Airport due to a drone-related incident. Although authorities confirmed the situation was quickly brought under control, the event highlighted the unpredictable nature of the current environment. Travelers are being told to remain extremely alert and stay in close contact with the U.S. Embassy for real-time updates.

Massive evacuation underway as Gulf crisis deepens

NEW DELHI

More than 2,20,000 Indian citizens have successfully returned home since the end of February as conflict continues to shake West Asia.

The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that a massive rescue operation is in full swing, with forty-five flights from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar scheduled to land at various Indian airports.

While many are flying back, others are taking difficult land routes to escape the danger. Around 640 Indians, including many pilgrims who were visiting Iran, have crossed into neighboring Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Indian embassy teams have been working around the clock at these borders to handle paperwork and ensure everyone stays safe. Despite the chaos, the embassy in Tehran remains open, moving students to secure areas away from the fighting.

The crisis has also turned tragic, with two Indian nationals killed during recent attacks in Oman. Officials in Muscat are currently working with grieving families to bring their loved ones home. On the water, the situation is equally tense. Twenty-two Indian ships with over 600 sailors are being monitored as they navigate the Persian Gulf. Fortunately, a major tanker carrying 81,000 tonnes of crude oil and a gas carrier are both safely on their way to Indian ports.

World leaders are now watching the region closely as vital shipping lanes remain blocked. While international pressure grows for a ceasefire, the Indian government says its main goal is clear: bringing every citizen home safely and keeping the nation's energy supplies moving during this unstable time.

India thanks Armenia for evacuating citizens safely

NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar expressed his heartfelt thanks to Armenia for helping evacuate 550 Indians from Iran amid the rising conflict there.

In a post on X, Jaishankar praised the Armenian government and people for their support during this difficult time. The evacuation was carefully planned through diplomatic coordination between New Delhi, Yerevan, and Tehran.

Among the evacuees were over 70 students, mostly from Jammu and Kashmir, who had been stranded at universities in Iran such as Urmia and Tehran University of Medical Sciences. They traveled long distances by bus to reach Armenia's Zvartnots International Airport before flying home safely.

The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association confirmed the students faced increasing security risks due to the ongoing war. The Indian embassy in Tehran and Armenian authorities worked closely to ensure their safety. The evacuation reflects India's commitment to protecting its citizens abroad.

Rights groups urge Rahman to protect freedom

DHAKA

Nine major international human rights organizations have issued a joint letter to Bangladesh's newly elected Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, urging his government to place human rights at the center of its legislative agenda after his party's landslide February victory. Groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch welcomed the end of the previous regime's abuses but warned that arbitrary arrests and threats to journalists and religious minorities persist. Meenakshi Ganguly said Rahman has a strong mandate to build independent institutions that uphold the rule of law and protect free expression. The groups also called for ending unlawful detentions, ensuring accountability for past abuses, safeguarding Rohingya refugees, and strengthening a credible National Human Rights Commission.

TALENT INNOVATION STRATEGY

Canada, India join for skills training

NEW DELHI

A high-level group of Canadian college leaders arrived in India recently to begin a week-long mission focused on workforce training. Organized by Colleges and Institutes Canada, the delegation plans to visit New Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai through March 20.

This initiative aims to build a stronger bridge between the two nations by sharing expertise in practical, industry-focused education and professional skill development.

This visit follows a February 2026 meeting between Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Indian officials, which launched a new joint strategy for talent and innovation. Leaders from famous schools like Humber Polytechnic, Centennial College, and Vancouver Community College are participating in the trip. They are joined by top executives who believe that aligning educational standards will help students in both countries find better jobs in the modern global economy.

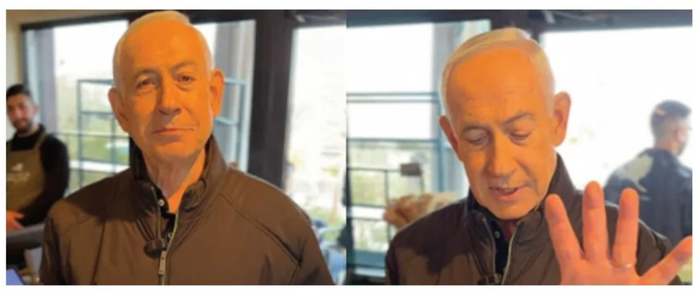
Throughout the week, the Canadian team will meet with government officials and business leaders to discuss long-term partnerships. The goal is to create joint training programs that use Canada's famous polytechnic model, which emphasizes hands-on learning over traditional lectures. By working together, both countries hope to prepare young workers for emerging industries and high-tech manufacturing roles.

Key Sectors

Training initiatives target high-growth areas including AI, sustainable mining (critical minerals), and agri-food.

Canadian High Commissioner Chris Cooter noted that India's massive young population offers a unique opportunity for collaboration. Officials believe that better skills training will not only boost economic growth but also diversify trade ties for the future. As the mission unfolds, both nations are looking toward a future where education and research move seamlessly across borders.

Israel proves PM Netanyahu is alive



NEW DELHI

Israel's Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, has officially stepped forward to crush viral social media rumors claiming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had passed away. In a direct statement addressing the digital firestorm, Azar confirmed that the Israeli leader is "very much alive" and well. He dismissed claims that recent footage of the Prime Minister was a high-tech hoax, labeling the speculation as dangerous disinformation.

The controversy peaked after skeptics online began analyzing videos for "AI glitches." Some users claimed to see extra fingers in previous clips, a common sign of poorly generated artificial intelligence. To counter these bizarre theories, Netanyahu shared a casual video on social media showing him drinking coffee at a local cafe. In the footage, he pointedly raised his hand to display five fingers, a silent but clear response to critics who alleged that deepfake technology had been used to hide his absence.

Ambassador Azar told reporters in New Delhi that he has personally seen the Prime Minister in Israel recently. He emphasized that the cafe video is completely authentic and not a product of AI manipulation. Israeli officials are now working hard to stop the spread of these baseless allegations, which they say are designed to cause public confusion.

Experts note that this strange episode highlights a growing problem for world leaders in the digital age. As deepfake technology becomes more common, even genuine videos are being questioned by the public. For now, the Israeli government hopes this clear evidence will finally silence the rumors and reassure the world of Netanyahu's health.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	5		3		4		6	7
6		4		9		5		
1		9	8		6		2	3
	4		6				9	8
7		5		3	8	2		4
2		8	1		7		5	6
	2	7		8		6		9
9		6		7			4	
5			4		9	8		2

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

2	1	5	9	4	7	8	6	3
8	7	9	6	2	3	5	1	4
4	3	6	8	5	1	9	2	7
9	6	1	4	7	5	3	8	2
7	5	8	2	3	6	1	4	9
3	4	2	1	9	8	7	5	6
5	8	4	7	6	9	2	3	1
6	9	3	5	1	2	4	7	8
1	2	7	3	8	4	6	9	5

Barcelona surged early as João Cancelo's foul led to Raphinha's double penalty

Hat trick for Raphinha as Barca beats Sevilla 5-2

BARCELONA

Raphinha scored a hat trick, including two penalties, as Barcelona routed Sevilla 5-2, reclaiming a four-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of La Liga and boosting morale ahead of their Champions League clash against Newcastle.

Barcelona took an early lead when Portugal defender João Cancelo was fouled in the box, allowing Raphinha to score a ninth-minute Panenka penalty that deceived goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos. A second penalty in the 18th minute, again converted by Raphinha, extended Barcelona's dominance. Dani Olmo added a third from Marc Bernal's cross in the 38th minute.

Sevilla pulled one back through Oso just before halftime, but Raphinha completed his hat trick after the break with a deflected shot that sailed over Vlachodimos. Cancelo then added a goal of his own, while Djibril Sow scored a late consolation for Sevilla, sealing the 5-2 scoreline.

The victory marked Barcelona's fourth consecutive league win and came after a dramatic 1-1 draw against Newcastle in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie, rescued by Lamine Yamal's last-minute penalty. Meanwhile, Real Madrid's 4-1 win over Elche had temporarily cut Barcelona's lead to one point, making Sunday's emphatic performance crucial.

Barcelona midfielder Gavi returned after more than 200 days sidelined due to a right knee meniscus operation, coming on in the 82nd minute to warm applause from fans.

Elsewhere in La Liga, Mallorca rallied to defeat Espanyol 2-1, Real Betis drew 1-1 with Celta Vigo, and Real Sociedad's Gonçalo Guedes scored twice as his team beat Osasuna 3-1.

Raphinha's hat trick and Barcelona's dominant display not only solidify their league lead but also inject confidence for the critical European fixtures ahead.

West Asia crisis forces Argentina-Spain Finalissima in Qatar cancellation

DOHA

The highly anticipated Finalissima tie between Argentina and Spain, scheduled for March 27 at Lusail International Stadium in Qatar, has been officially cancelled due to escalating tensions in the Middle East.

The match, pitting Copa America champions Argentina against EURO 2024 winners Spain, was intended as a marquee fixture ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 beginning on June 11. UEFA confirmed that the ongoing conflict, triggered by Iran's intensified retaliatory attacks following aerial strikes by the United States and Israel, made the security of the event untenable. "After much discussion between UEFA and the organising authorities in Qatar, the Finalissima… cannot be played as hoped on 27 March," the European governing body announced on X.

UEFA explored alternative venues, including Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, with a proposed 50:50 split of supporters. However, the Argentine Football Association rejected this option. A two-legged arrangement, with a match in Madrid and a return fixture in Buenos Aires before the 2028 Euros and Copa America, was also declined. "Regrettably, UEFA said the match taking place on the 31st… was not possible, and so the Finalissima was cancelled," CONMEBOL stated, expressing deep regret despite extensive efforts to find a neutral ground.

The cancellation adds to a growing list of global sporting disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis. Formula 1 races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, originally scheduled for April, have been called off, and US President Donald Trump suggested Iran may be barred from participating in the World Cup co-hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico.

The Finalissima, first held in 2022, saw Argentina clinch the inaugural edition with a 3-0 victory over Italy at Wembley Stadium. Sunday's cancellation underscores the far-reaching impact of geopolitical instability on international sports, depriving fans of a high-profile clash between Lionel Messi's Argentina and Spain, led by emerging talents including Lamine Yamal.

Iran remains committed to playing all group matches at FIFA World Cup 2026 in the U.S.

AFC Confirms Iran Will Participate in FIFA WC 2026

KUALA LUMPUR

Iran's national football team is still set to participate in the FIFA World Cup, scheduled to begin in June across the United States, Mexico, and Canada, despite concerns over regional tensions. Speaking at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Windsor John affirmed, "They are our member. We want them to play. As far as we know, Iran is playing." He added that the Iranian federation has confirmed its intention to compete in the tournament.

The reassurance comes after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested on social media that it might be unsafe for Iran to participate given the ongoing Middle East crisis. Iran responded, emphasizing that "no one can exclude" it from the global event and that the tournament is governed by FIFA, not by political leaders. Iran is scheduled to play its three group-stage games in the U.S.: against New Zealand in Inglewood on June 16, Belgium on June 21, and Egypt in Seattle on June 27. Ranked 20th globally by FIFA, Iran has qualified for its fourth consecutive World Cup, reinforcing its status as a powerhouse in Asian football.

Despite the regional war sparking doubts, Iran's sports minister Ahmad Donyamali had previously indicated that participation might be impossible. The AFC statement clarifies the continental body's position, leaving the decision in the hands of Iran's football federation.

Ahead of the tournament, Iranian officials are expected to attend FIFA's annual congress on April 30 in Vancouver. Their absence from preparatory meetings in Atlanta last week highlighted logistical challenges, but the team remains committed to competing. AFC and FIFA officials have indicated that all necessary arrangements are being monitored closely to ensure Iran's participation, underscoring football's resilience amid political tensions.

With the World Cup fast approaching, Iran's confirmation brings relief to fans and players alike, ensuring that the nation's footballing ambitions will be on display on one of the sport's biggest stages.

Vimal Kumar urges BWF to rethink proposed scoring system changes

BENGALURU

Former Indian shuttler and coach U Vimal Kumar has formally written to Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, requesting that the Badminton World Federation reconsider its proposed scoring system changes. In February, the BWF suggested moving from the current best-of-three games of 21 points to best-of-three games of 15 points, a proposal that has sparked widespread debate among players and coaches worldwide.

In his letter, Vimal emphasized that while he supports the BWF's long-term vision, altering the 21-point format could undermine badminton's physical, tactical, and mental demands. "The current 21-point best-of-three format is working extremely well and should not be compromised without exhaustive consultation," he wrote, urging the federation to carefully weigh the implications before implementing irreversible changes.

Vimal has outlined 10 core recommendations, including retaining the 21-point format for men's and women's singles at Tour 1000 and 750 events. He suggested that the 15-point format, if tested, be limited to Tour 500 or lower-tier events, or to doubles competitions. Other recommendations include extending tournament durations to improve match quality and player longevity, better calendar scheduling, and providing additional rest days for athletes.

He also proposed rotating major events over a three-year cycle—Sudirman Cup in Year 1, Thomas & Uber Cup in Year 2, and the World Championships in Year 3—with a revival of home-and-away matches for Thomas & Uber Cups, similar to the Davis Cup in tennis. Additionally, he recommended increasing draw sizes in Tour 1000 and 750 events to 64 players.

Vimal's interventions reflect growing concerns in the badminton community about maintaining competitive integrity, physical rigor, and the sport's tactical richness while considering new formats. His suggestions aim to balance innovation with tradition, ensuring that any changes enhance the game without compromising its core qualities.

MUMBAI INDIANS Kick Off Preparations for IPL 2026 Campaign

MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians begin training ahead of their IPL 2026 season opener against Kolkata

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians began their preparatory camp on Monday, signalling the start of their build-up to the 2026 Indian Premier League season, which starts on March 28. The first group of players, including Shardul Thakur, Mayank Markande, Allah Ghazanfar, Naman Dhir, Raja Angad Bawa, Robin Minz, Raghu Sharma, Mayank Rawat, Danish Malewar, Mohammad Izhar, and Ashwani Kumar, arrived for training at the team's Mumbai base.

The remainder of the squad, including stars like Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, and captain Hardik Pandya, is expected to join over the next few days as the camp intensifies. Head coach Mahela Jayawardene said the first day was crucial for setting the tone of the season.

"There's always something special about the first day of pre-season. You see the players walk in, the energy builds, and the objective is to start strong. We have players who know this franchise inside out, and some exciting new faces," Jayawardene said. "Day one sets the tone for the entire campaign. We wanted everyone to feel the intent from the very first session, in how we train, prepare, and show up for each other."

The initial session focused on fitness and conditioning, with drills targeting agility, movement, and strength assessments. The coaching staff emphasised building a foundation to maintain performance over the demanding IPL season.

Mumbai Indians, who reached the playoffs in the previous season, will begin their 2026 campaign against Kolkata Knight Riders on March 29 at the Wankhede Stadium. With a mix of experienced campaigners and promising newcomers, the team aims to reclaim the title and continue their record of dominance in the league.

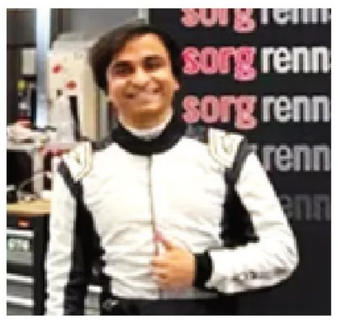
Indian Racer Akshay Gupta Steps Up to Porsche GT4 for 2026 Nurburgring Series

AHMEDABAD

Indian racecar driver Akshay Gupta is set to take the next step in his endurance racing career by joining Sorg Rennsport for the 2026 Nurburgring Langstrecken-Serie (NLS). The 33-year-old from Ahmedabad will drive the #949 Porsche Cayman GT4 CS in the highly competitive Cup3 class, which forms part of the Porsche Endurance Trophy Nurburgring (PETN).

Gupta will share driving duties with 19-year-old German Darian Donkel—his former teammate at Mertens Motorsport in 2025—and fellow German racer Aaron Wenisch. After three seasons in the VT2 production classes with Hyundai and BMW, where he secured six podiums and two victories, Gupta now steps into GT4 machinery, aiming for the Pro AM championship this season.

"The last three years in the production classes were a huge learning experience," Gupta said. "GT4 cars are the immediate next step, and I'm happy to join a strong and experienced team. I know my teammates well and we aim to compete at the top of the Cup3 field."



The Cup3 category is renowned for its large grids and tightly matched one-make cars, where driver skill plays a decisive role. Gupta's new team, Sorg Rennsport, is one of the most established Porsche endurance outfits at the Nürburgring, fielding 10 entries and claiming over 50 class wins in NLS and RCN events.

The 2026 season features 10 races, including nine four-hour events, a six-hour race, and the prestigious 24 Hours of Nürburgring in May, where international stars, including Formula 1 World Champion Max Verstappen in GT3, will also compete. Gupta remains the only Indian racing in the full NLS championship for the third consecutive season, continuing to represent India on the European endurance stage.

Sixteen-year-old Max Dowman becomes Premier League's youngest scorer in dramatic win

Premier League: Record-breaker Dowman propels Arsenal closer to title triumph

LONDON

Arsenal teenager Max Dowman continued his meteoric rise by becoming the youngest ever goalscorer in Premier League history, propelling the Gunners closer to the title. In a 2-0 victory over Everton at the Emirates Stadium, the 16-year-old collected the ball midway in his own half, dribbled past two defenders, and raced clear to tap into an empty net, with Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford stranded upfield after advancing for a corner. Viktor Gyokeres had earlier opened the scoring in the 89th minute, benefiting from Pickford's misjudged attempt to stop a Dowman cross.

"This boy doesn't seem fazed by the occasion, the moment, or the opponent. He just plays naturally," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. "He makes decisions to make things happen, and what he delivered was incredible. I told him to go and do your thing — and win us the game."

Dowman, at 16 years and 73 days, surpassed former Everton player James Vaughan, who held the record at 16 years, 270 days when he scored in 2005. He is still attending school and trains with Arsenal's senior squad under strict Premier League regulations for under-18 players. His rise has been swift: last November, he became the youngest player in Champions League history at 15 years, 308 days when he appeared against Slavia Prague.

Meanwhile, Manchester City stumbled in a 1-1 draw against West Ham, allowing Arsenal to extend their lead to four points at the top of the table. Pep Guardiola's side has now dropped four points to relegation-threatened sides in their last two league outings, following a 3-0 Champions League loss to Real Madrid midweek.

Shubman Gill Sets Sights on Winning 2027 WC in SA

NEW DELHI

Shubman Gill says next year's World Cup is India's ultimate cricketing target.

India's One-Day International captain Shubman Gill has declared that winning the 2027 ICC Cricket World Cup is the ultimate goal for his team, following the heartbreak of losing the 2023 final on home soil. India's unbeaten run during that tournament ended in a defeat to Australia in Ahmedabad, a result that still resonates with the squad.

Gill reflected on the near miss and looked ahead with optimism. "We felt like we were so close last time. To be able to get another crack at it in South Africa, it's going to be a great opportunity for us. Winning a World Cup in any format for the country is the ultimate goal. That's something that sometimes runs in my mind," he said.

India's cricketing fortunes have risen sharply since, with the men clinching back-to-back T20 World Cups and the women securing their first ODI World Cup title last year. T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav highlighted the importance of these victories in building a winning culture. "That one step was important, that taste was important for everyone to understand what it takes to win an ICC trophy. Now, there is no looking back. If this wonderful thing has started, let's try and collect as many trophies as possible," he said.

The 2027 World Cup is scheduled to take place in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia in October November next year, and India will enter the tournament as strong contenders.

QUICK READ

India can shield fuel prices until oil spikes

New Delhi

India still has room to keep petrol and diesel prices stable even if global crude oil prices rise sharply, according to a new report. The study said the government can cut existing fuel taxes to prevent retail price hikes until crude oil reaches around $110 per barrel. Currently, excise duty on petrol stands at Rs 19.9 per litre and Rs 15.8 per litre on diesel. These taxes give the government a buffer to manage sudden increases in crude oil costs without passing the burden to consumers immediately. The report estimates India can absorb a $40–45 jump in crude prices through tax reductions. However, if oil crosses $110 per barrel, fuel prices may need to rise for consumers. Rising crude also affects oil companies. For every $10 increase in crude prices, fuel marketing margins fall while cooking gas losses rise. Analysts say companies like IOCL may handle the pressure better, but prolonged high crude prices could still impact the entire energy sector.

Union Bank plans massive bond fundraising push

Mumbai

Union Bank of India has approved a plan to raise up to Rs 20,000 crore through long-term bonds to support infrastructure and affordable housing projects. The decision was taken by the bank's Committee of Directors for fund raising. According to the bank, the funds will be raised in one or more phases through long-term bonds. Part of the amount may be raised before March 31, 2026. The bank is planning an initial issue of Rs 7,500 crore, which includes a base issue of Rs 3,000 crore and a green shoe option of Rs 4,500 crore with a tenure of 10 years. The committee also approved a proposal to raise up to Rs 5,000 crore through green or sustainable bonds. These funds will support environmentally friendly and sustainable projects. The meeting of the committee began at 10 a.m. and ended at 10.20 a.m., during which the proposals were reviewed and approved.

Government claims $2.81 Billion in gas dispute

New Delhi

The government has claimed $2.81 billion from Reliance Industries and British energy major BP over allegations of siphoning natural gas from fields owned by ONGC in the eastern offshore Krishna-Godavari basin. Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Suresh Gopi informed the Rajya Sabha that the matter is currently pending before the Supreme Court. The claim follows a February 2025 decision by the Delhi High Court that supported the government's demand. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has alleged that between 2004 and 2013-14, gas was drawn from ONGC's neighbouring blocks by Reliance's KG-D6 project. Officials said this resulted in unjust financial gains worth more than $1.55 billion, excluding interest. Reliance Industries has denied the allegation, saying the gas naturally migrated across field boundaries and was not illegally extracted. The company has challenged the High Court ruling in the Supreme Court, where the case is now being heard.

Gas supply stable as consumer panic fades

After days of panic buying, cooking gas bookings fall as supply stabilizes and govt cracks down on hoarding and black-markeing.

NEW DELHI

The frantic rush to book cooking gas is finally slowing down as families realize there is plenty of fuel to go around.

Recent government data shows a significant drop in daily orders, signaling that the wave of panic buying which gripped neighborhoods last week is finally coming to an end.

Recently the officials recorded 77 lakh bookings, a sharp dip from nearly 89 lakh the day before. This shift suggests that the public feels more secure about future supplies. To keep things moving smoothly, authorities have even kept gas agencies open on Sundays. They are also pushing for digital bookings via WhatsApp and mobile apps, which now account for 87 percent of all orders.

While the supply remains steady, the government is playing tough with anyone trying to profit from the situation. Raids are currently happening across various states to stop illegal hoarding and black marketing. So far, 22 states have set up special control rooms to watch the market like a hawk. These teams are ensuring that no one hides cylinders to drive up prices.

The Ministry of Petroleum confirmed that hospitals, schools, and homes remain the top priority. Major companies like Indian Oil and Bharat Petroleum report that gas stations are full and deliveries are happening on schedule. Despite global tensions, officials insist there is no reason to worry or rush to the store. The message to the public is simple: stay calm, book online, and trust that the kitchen fire will keep burning without any interruptions.

Trade gap shrinks despite Middle East conflict

NEW DELHI

India's trade deficit narrows to $27.1 billion in February, a positive sign for the economy despite rising global tensions. New data from the Ministry of Commerce shows that while exports held steady at over $36 billion, a significant drop in imports helped close the gap from the much higher levels seen in January.

This economic resilience comes at a critical time. Following the outbreak of the Iran war in late February, the vital Strait of Hormuz has been choked, threatening global oil and food shipments. However, India has successfully navigated these choppy waters by diversifying its energy sources. While the Middle East used to be the primary supplier, India now brings in a large portion of its oil from Russia and forty other nations.

To ensure stability, the government is in direct talks with Iran to keep merchant ships moving. Over the past few days, several Indian vessels carrying crude oil and cooking gas safely crossed the troubled region. Officials confirmed that hundreds of Indian sailors currently at sea are safe, and ships are scheduled to arrive at domestic ports this week as planned.

The nation's financial foundation remains rock-solid. With massive foreign exchange reserves and strategic oil stocks that can last over 70 days, India is well-prepared to absorb global shocks. This careful planning ensures that the country faces no immediate energy crisis. By managing supplies and focusing on diverse trade partners, India continues to protect its domestic interests and maintain steady growth even as conflict disrupts traditional international shipping routes.

India's trade deficit narrows to $27.1 billion as imports drop, exports remain steady, and energy supply stays secure.

BASMATI RICE EXPORTS STAY STRONG AMID CONFLICT

NEW DELHI

India's famous basmati rice is proving to be resilient even as tensions rise in the Middle East.

A new report by Crisil Ratings suggests that export volumes will remain steady throughout the next two years, despite the ongoing war in Iran. While shipments to Iran have slowed down, higher demand from neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Iraq is expected to fill the gap.

India currently dominates the global market, producing nearly 85 percent of the world's basmati rice. Although the Middle East buys about 70 percent of these exports, the industry is finding clever ways to keep the grain moving. Exporters are already exploring new shipping routes to avoid dangerous waters, ensuring that dinner tables across the world stay supplied. While these longer journeys might take more time and money, the global love for aromatic rice remains unshaken.

The report notes that any extra costs for shipping or insurance will likely be passed on to international buyers, protecting the profits of Indian farmers and traders. Even though heavy rains slightly impacted paddy production this season, the steady demand ensures that prices remain stable. Officials believe that while logistical hurdles like ship shortages might cause minor delays, the overall trade will grow by about 2 percent.

For the thousands of families involved in rice farming, this is welcome news. It shows that India's top export remains a global favorite, capable of weathering political storms. By diversifying its customers and adapting to new routes, the basmati industry continues to stand tall as a pillar of India's trade.

New rewards for duty free airport shoppers

AHMEDABAD

Flying just got a little more rewarding for millions of travelers across India. Budget airline IndiGo has teamed up with Adani Airports to give loyal passengers a special treat.

Starting today, members of the airline's "BluChips" program can earn points every time they shop at duty-free stores located in several major Indian cities.

The deal is straightforward and easy to use. For every 100 rupees spent on luxury goods or travel essentials, shoppers will receive five reward chips. To get the deal, travelers simply browse and pay for their items online through a special digital portal before they even leave for the airport. Once they arrive, they can quickly pick up their pre-packed bags at a designated counter, saving time and avoiding long lines.

This partnership brings together the nation's largest airline and its biggest private airport operator. Leaders from both companies say the goal is to make the journey feel more connected and beneficial. They want to reward customers for more than just their time spent in the air. Currently, this offer is live in busy hubs like Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow, with plans to expand soon to newer locations like the recently opened Navi Mumbai airport.

Points are added to a traveler's account within two days of their purchase. By linking their membership IDs to the shopping platform, passengers can watch their rewards grow while they fly. It is a smart move that turns a routine airport stroll into a way to save money on future trips and experiences.

India Post launches guaranteed next day delivery

NEW DELHI

Sending urgent mail is about to get much faster as India Post prepares to launch its premier express service. The new "24 Speed Post" initiative promises to deliver parcels and documents within just twenty-four hours, marking a major shift in how the nation's oldest postal network handles time-sensitive deliveries. In its first phase, this lightning-fast service will focus on six major metro hubs: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. Along with the one-day guarantee, the department is also introducing a forty-eight-hour option for other shipments. Both services will use priority air travel and dedicated sorting centers to ensure that your packages don't sit idle. To keep things secure, the post office is moving into the digital age with OTP-based verification and real-time SMS tracking for every sender.

PhonePe puts stock market debut on hold

NEW DELHI

Popular payments giant PhonePe has decided to press the pause button on its highly anticipated public listing. The company announced it is temporarily delaying its Initial Public Offering (IPO) due to ongoing global conflicts and unpredictable swings in the financial markets. The fintech leader plans to wait for a more stable global environment before moving forward with its debut on the Indian stock exchange.

CEO Sameer Nigam expressed hope for a quick return to peace in troubled regions while reaffirming the company's long-term goal. He noted that despite the delay, PhonePe remains fully committed to launching its IPO in India once the dust settles. Since its start in 2016, the app has grown into a household name, boasting over 65 crore registered users and a massive network of nearly five crore merchants.

While the big market move is on hold, the company is not slowing down its tech innovations. Earlier this year, they launched a new feature called "PhonePe PG Bolt" to make shopping online much faster. This tool allows users to save their Visa and Mastercard details securely as "tokens." This means shoppers don't have to re-enter their card numbers or security codes every time they buy something, leading to a much smoother one-click checkout experience.

Company leaders say this new tech helps businesses grow by making sure fewer customers drop out during the payment process. By focusing on these digital upgrades now, PhonePe aims to be in an even stronger position when it finally decides to join the public market.

Women lead India's surge in iPhone making

NEW DELHI

The "Make in India" dream is being built by the hands of thousands of women across the country. The IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw shared the impressive news that over one lakh women are now working directly in factories that build iPhones.

This massive wave of employment shows how the electronics sector is becoming a primary engine for female empowerment and financial independence.

From assembling high-tech smartphones to working in complex semiconductor plants, women are taking on roles that were once hard to find. In many electronic factories, more than half the staff are now female.

The Apple ecosystem alone has created roughly 2.5 lakh direct jobs, and nearly 70 percent of those workers are women. This shift isn't just about numbers, it is about providing large-scale skilling and career paths for a new generation of workers.

The growth is backed by strong government support. Thanks to special subsidies, Apple has ramped up its Indian production by 53 percent in the last year, churning out 55 million units. India now builds about a quarter of all flagship iPhones sold globally. These devices have become the nation's most valuable export, with billions of dollars worth of phones flying out to markets like the United States.

By moving production away from other countries and into local hubs, India has turned smartphones into its top export category. For the thousands of women entering these high-tech workspaces every day, the initiative is proving to be a life-changing opportunity for a brighter, more secure future.

CCI urges firms to audit AI systems

NEW DELHI

India's competition regulator is sounding the alarm on the rapid rise of artificial intelligence in the business world.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has officially asked companies to carefully review the AI tools they build and use. The warning comes as officials worry that poorly designed automated systems could accidentally crush fair market competition and hurt consumers.

CCI Chairperson Ravneet Kaur emphasized that businesses should conduct "self-audits" during every stage of a tool's life—from early development to daily monitoring.

Speaking at a national conference, she explained that catching hidden biases or unfair patterns early is much better than trying to fix a broken market later. A recent study by the regulator found that AI could lead to problems like secret price hikes, unfair favoritism toward a company's own products, and a lack of transparency in how decisions are made.

Despite these warnings, the regulator isn't trying to stifle progress. Kaur noted that AI brings massive benefits, such as lowering costs for shoppers and helping small startups compete with giant corporations. To support this, government projects like the "IndiaAI Mission" are providing developers with the advanced chips and computing power they need to grow.

KEEP RISING!

Costly memory chips drive phone prices up

NEW DELHI

Indian smartphone shoppers are facing a tough season as the cost of essential memory chips skyrockets globally. A new report reveals that the "brain" of your phone—the RAM—has tripled in price over the last year.

This surge is creating a massive ripple effect, making it harder for manufacturers to keep prices low and shelves stocked across the country.

The primary reason for this digital drought is the sudden explosion of Artificial Intelligence.

Massive AI companies are buying up all available memory supplies to power their giant servers, leaving very little left for the mobile phone market. Because of this, the average price of a new handset in India has already jumped by 8 percent since September. Experts warn that these high prices could stick around until at least 2027, hit hardest in the budget-friendly category.

Popular brands like Motorola and Realme have seen their sales volumes drop sharply as they struggle with these rising costs. Some companies have reported a staggering 68 percent decline in production compared to last year. While India remains a global leader in making phones—exporting billions of dollars worth of devices led by Apple—this hardware shortage is a major speed bump for local growth.

Industry leaders are now warning customers that "Made in India" phones might get even more expensive soon. Despite the country being the world's second-largest phone producer, the global chip war is making it difficult for brands to meet their targets. For now, the message is clear: expect to pay more for your next upgrade.

CHINNASWAMY STADIUM cleared to host IPL 2026 season opener

Govt approval follows safety review ahead of RCB–SRH clash on March 28

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has granted formal approval for the iconic M. Chinnaswamy Stadium to host matches of the 2026 Indian Premier League season, clearing the way for the tournament opener between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad on March 28.

The approval came after the state government reviewed safety, infrastructure and operational arrangements at the venue following an inspection by an expert committee. The committee, led by Greater Bengaluru Authority chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao, assessed the preparedness of the stadium and the measures taken to ensure smooth conduct of matches.

According to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), the decision was taken after the expert panel submitted its recommendations to the state authorities. KSCA spokesperson Vinay Mruthyunjaya confirmed that the Home Minister approved the hosting of IPL matches after reviewing the committee's findings and the arrangements made at the venue.

The association also expressed gratitude to members of the expert committee and officials involved in the evaluation process. It thanked Maheshwar Rao for overseeing the review of infrastructure readiness and Commissioner of Police Sreemant Kumar Singh, who served as member secretary of the panel, for coordinating safety and security assessments.

The clearance comes after months of uncertainty surrounding the stadium's readiness. The venue had remained under scrutiny since a tragic stampede during the victory parade celebrating Royal Challengers Bengaluru's maiden IPL title in June last year claimed 11 lives and left several others injured. Following the incident, a one-man commission led by retired judge Michael D'Cunha highlighted safety concerns and recommended structural and operational improvements at the stadium.

Subsequently, the KSCA initiated several upgrades, including increasing the number of entry and exit gates and strengthening crowd management systems. After former India cricketer Venkatesh Prasad assumed office as KSCA president later in the year, the association accelerated renovation and compliance works. Earlier this year, the stadium received conditional approval to host international and IPL matches, though authorities had sought further improvements. After additional inspections and discussions, the expert committee has now cleared the venue, allowing Bengaluru's premier cricket ground to once again stage top-level cricket.

Suryakumar reveals gut-feel behind Ishan Kishan's WC selection

NEW DELHI

India captain Suryakumar Yadav has revealed that his decision to include explosive wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan in the T20 World Cup squad was purely instinctive, guided by a "gut feeling" that the Bihar batsman could be the X-factor for India's title defence. Kishan, who had been out of the team for a while, repaid his skipper's faith by scoring 317 runs in nine matches at a strike rate of over 190, including a blistering half-century in the final against New Zealand.

Suryakumar admitted that the decision was difficult, as regular opener Jitesh Sharma had been part of the team for over a year. "It was completely on gut, little bit on data… someone had to miss out," he said, adding that Kishan had "no baggage" and had worked tirelessly in domestic and practice games to stay in contention. Suryakumar also highlighted another key call: the inclusion of Sanju Samson in the opening slot. Samson's back-to-back scores of 89 in the semifinals and final were decisive in India winning their second consecutive World Cup, earning him player of the tournament honours. The skipper praised Samson not only for his talent but for his character, saying, "If you are a great human being, good things happen to good people."

On his own approach to batting, Suryakumar said he is largely reaction-driven: reading the bowler and responding instinctively. "Seventy to seventy-five per cent approach in batting is driven by reaction and the rest is your instinct. On a given day, you assess what it needed from you and bat accordingly," he explained. Kishan's explosive contributions and Samson's consistency proved pivotal, vindicating Suryakumar's instinctive selection choices and underlining the importance of intuition alongside data in high-stakes cricket. India's triumph reflected careful planning, bold decisions, and players stepping up when it mattered most.

Skipper says instinct, not just data, led him to pick Kishan for World Cup

Youth boxer Chandrika inspires slum kids, one punch at a time

CHENNAI

Seventeen-year-old Chandrika Pujari from the Tadiwala Road slums in Pune is making headlines after clinching gold at the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026 in Bangkok, becoming a symbol of hope and inspiration for children in underprivileged communities. Competing in the 51kg category, Chandrika defeated Uzbekistan's Mardonova Nazokat by unanimous decision, continuing her impressive trajectory on the path to the Youth Olympic Games later this year in Dakar.

Chandrika's journey began at the Yuva Boxing Club, founded by Sachin Shinde in 2017 to guide slum children toward sports and away from negative influences. "Children from slum regions tend to get into bad habits. We started the club to divert their minds," Shinde explained. Chandrika joined the club at age 10 and quickly displayed exceptional talent, balancing training with the hardships of her family's modest background. Her father works as a helper and her mother as a house cleaner, yet she has remained committed to boxing while inspiring peers to take up sports.

Chandrika progressed from Yuva Boxing Club to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Goa and later to the prestigious Army Sports Institute in Pune, where she trained alongside top athletes like Nikhat Zareen. Her coach, Jayant Shinde, recalls the challenges she overcame, including limited facilities and initial reluctance from her family, highlighting her resilience and determination.

Mithali Raj hails era of Indian cricket dominance at BCCI awards

NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mithali Raj said her long-held dream of seeing Indian cricket dominate the world is finally coming true, with men's, women's, and junior sides achieving major global titles in recent years. Mithali highlighted the 2024 T20 World Cup win by the men's team, the women's maiden ODI World Cup title, and under-19 victories as markers of India's rising cricketing power.

"For the longest time, I wanted Indian cricket to dominate and the time has come," Mithali said. "The last two-three years, Indian cricket – men, women, and the under-19 girls or boys – they've been doing immensely well. It's a proud moment as a former cricketer to see the growth of Indian cricket."

Mithali, along with former India players Rahul Dravid and Roger Binny, received the prestigious Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award. She credited BCCI secretary and current ICC chief Jay Shah for driving transformative change in Indian cricket, particularly women's cricket, noting the introduction of equal match fees and the launch of the fully professional Women's Premier League.

"I've seen the evolution of women's cricket and I need to acknowledge the support of BCCI and Jay sir. In the last four-five years, there has been a huge transformation of the Indian women's cricket team," she said, praising his vision and commitment to raising the sport's profile globally.

Reflecting on her own journey, Mithali said she drew inspiration from male legends like Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, whose guidance shaped her approach to batting and leadership. She emphasized that interaction between men's and women's cricket fosters growth, helping women cricketers aspire to the highest standards.

Meanwhile, Binny spoke about his evolution from player to coach and administrator, mentoring younger generations and contributing to India's cricketing success, underscoring the continuity of talent development across levels.

Mithali's remarks celebrate a watershed moment for Indian cricket, signaling sustained excellence across genders and age groups, and honoring those who have nurtured the sport's growth.

Legendary cricketer celebrates success of men's, women's, and junior teams

Karnataka's Purushotham, Mubassina shine at India Open Jump Competition

BENGALURU

Karnataka's Purushotham Ham claimed the men's long jump title at the India Open Jump Competition, leaping 7.87 metres to secure gold at the Anju Bobby Sports Foundation in Bengaluru. Meanwhile, 20-year-old Mubassina Mohammed from Lakshadweep dominated the women's event, recording a new personal best of 6.38 metres.

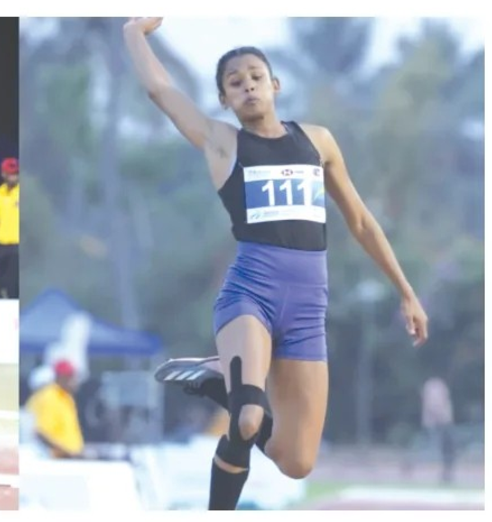
Purushotham, 24, overcame a three-year slump following a ligament injury to surpass his previous best of 7.59 metres. With national stars like Jeswin Aldrin and M Sreeshankar absent, the athlete from Hassan stole the spotlight, overtaking Odisha's Suran Payasingh (7.78m) and Tamil Nadu's S Saran (7.77m) on his fifth attempt. "I am a civil engineer who chose athletics over a career in engineering. This result means the world to me," he said, highlighting his perseverance and dedication.

Results

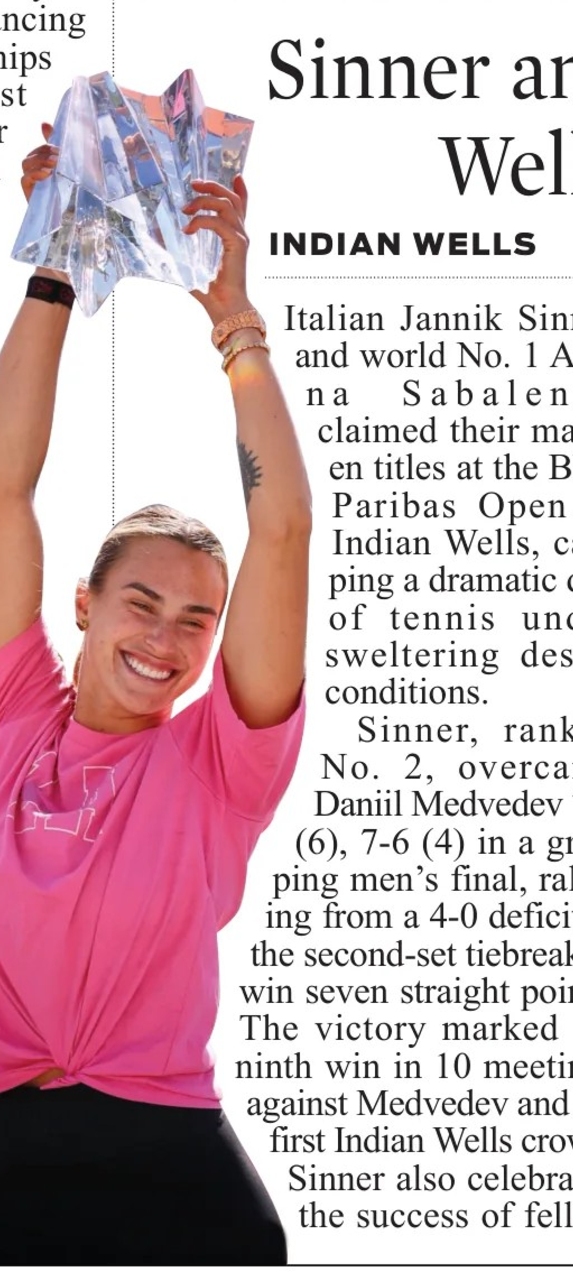
Men's Long Jump – Purushotham Ham (Kar) 7.87m; Suran Payasingh (Odi) 7.78m; S Saran (TN) 7.77m.

Women's Long Jump – Mubassina Mohammed (ABSF) 6.38m; Bhavani Yadav 6.27m; Kusuma Ravada 3rd.

In the women's long jump, Mubassina, coached by Dronacharya awardee Robert Bobby George, improved her personal best from 6.36 to 6.38 metres. Despite falling short of her Asian Games qualification mark, her performance impressed the coaching staff and inspired upcoming athletes at the home turf Anju Bobby Sports Foundation. "We hope she achieves the mark at the Indian Athletics Series 1 in April," Robert said.



Sinner and Sabalenka win first Indian Wells titles in thrilling finals



INDIAN WELLS

Italian Jannik Sinner and world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka claimed their maiden titles at the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, capping a dramatic day of tennis under sweltering desert conditions.

Sinner, ranked No. 2, overcame Daniil Medvedev 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) in a gripping men's final, rallying from a 4-0 deficit in the second-set tiebreak to win seven straight points. The victory marked his ninth win in 10 meetings against Medvedev and his first Indian Wells crown. Sinner also celebrated the success of fellow Italian Kimi Antonelli, who won the Formula One Chinese Grand Prix earlier that day, calling it "a special day for Italy."

On the women's side, Sabalenka edged Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (6), securing her first Indian Wells title after previous runner-up finishes in 2023 and 2025. The 27-year-old Belarusian clinched the championship with a decisive backhand winner in a tense third-set tiebreak, despite having been broken at 5-4 and facing a championship point herself.

"I think the whole idea going into this match was to be mentally strong… to show with the body language that I'm here, I'm fighting," Sabalenka said. She also reflected on a remarkable personal and professional stretch, including adopting a puppy, getting engaged, and now winning her first desert title.

This final was the 16th meeting between Sabalenka and Rybakina, with Sabalenka now holding a 9-7 edge. Despite the grueling battle, Sabalenka will immediately shift focus to defending her title at the Miami Open, saying, "I'll probably have a couple drinks on the plane and that's it… I have to bring my best tennis there."

IPL matches in Assam overlap with elections, ACA confident of smooth conduct

CHENNAI

The 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) season will kick off on March 28, but cricket fans in Assam may face a tight schedule as two Guwahati matches fall around the state's assembly election. The Assam Cricket Association (ACA) is preparing to host the fixtures amid polling on April 9, confident that law and order and logistical arrangements will ensure smooth conduct.

Barsapara Cricket Stadium, Guwahati's second home for Rajasthan Royals, will host three matches in the first phase: RR vs Chennai Super Kings on March 30, RR vs Mumbai Indians on April 7, and RR vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru on April 10. The April 7 and 10 fixtures are particularly close to Assam's voting date.

An ACA official told, "Matches will happen as scheduled. We are preparing accordingly. Security and coordination with authorities are our priority." Officials are working closely with local administration to avoid conflicts between the IPL games and election duties.

Elsewhere, elections in Kerala and Puducherry are also scheduled for April 9, while Tamil Nadu votes on April 23, and West Bengal in two phases on April 23 and 29. Counting of votes across these states will take place on May 4.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.